

The Resistance

by Verya

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Summary: PFC Brigid McClain was your normal recruit in advanced Spec Ops training until an accident changed her life forever. Now her base planet is under attack, she and her squad must survive in an uncharted planet. Will they find hope for humanity, or death?

1. Prolouge

**Hey **

**Well, just a warning, this is my first Halo fic.**

**Nywho.**

**Read on my fellow fansâ€¦!**

**(I don't own Halo and I never will**)

Another explosion shook the base, Brigid felt herself hit the ground as the rumbling increased and looked around. The marine that had been carrying her was down, she could see blood trailing from his mouth. Brigid shook it off and rose shakily to her knees. It had only been a minute, no Covenant were around. Brigid looked around, her eyes hurt. It had only been a little over a week since her operations and she was still feeling the side effects in full swing. She had not been trained to handle what she was going through, and there were no Spartans here to guide her.

Another rumble shook the building and Brigid clutched the wall to remain upright. She felt a little better now as her knees came under her. She felt light without any armor, there was very little she would not have given to have armor around her. Her surgeon had forbidden her to wear armor and she was only clad in a grey UNSC shirt with black cargo pants and sturdy boots. A new Marine put his arm around her waist, Brigid shook him off, she did not need to be

babied. They turned as a thud resounded at the door.

"They're coming!" One female marine shouted.

"Brace!" The sergeant yelled. Two marines turned two benches into a door blockage.

"Sergeant!" Brigid yelled. "I need a weapon!" The sergeant tossed her two pistols and Brigid armed them, pointing them at the door.

"Fall back to the armory," Sarge said, "Lisak, get a satchel on that door and blow it as soon as we're through." Lisak nodded and threw a charge at the door, the detonator was in his hand. The squad backed through the door and ran into the armory. Brigid ran around, she grabbed two shotguns, a belt for her pistols, a battle rifle, and as many grenades as she could. Brigid then equipped herself with a chest-plate, gauntlets, and leg guards. Brigid winced as the gauntlet closed over her left arm, the stitches from repairing her arm were still new. Her arm had been split open to the bone and four bones in her arm and hand had been replaced. The accident had changed her life, and it was still changing.

"Sergeant," Brigid called. She was out of uniform and his junior in rank, but she was still a battle-hardened veteran. "Sergeant we need to get to the hanger and get off this rock. The Covenant aren't going to wait to glass this planet." The Ku-Lita was one of the most outlying systems that the UNSC controlled, and backup was distant. Sarge nodded at Brigid. A plasma blast hit nearby and Brigid winced as two marines were burned away. Brigid felt heat filter over her back and she was blown back through a doorway. She shook her head and raised it as dust and rubble poured down around her. Brigid coughed and saw that the squad she had been talking to was now gone. She crawled over to each one, keeping her head down, and scrounged the Sergeant for any information about Reach, or Earth, or any other military base. Thankfully he had none and she could continue her crawl out.

"Brigid!" She heard a familiar voice sound. Kyle ran in from the cafeteria. "Brigid!" Brigid got to her feet and Kyle wrapped his arm around her. "You're all right, I've been looking for you."

"Kyle," Brigid said, "Come on, we've got to get out of here."

"Jo and Brian are up ahead with Sarge," Kyle explained. "This way." Brigid followed Kyle to another one of the many armories in the base.

"Who else made it through?" Brigid asked as she saw gunfire from the other side.

"Just the five of us," Kyle replied, "Matt bought it back in the barracks, Luke and John died destroying some hunters, and Juba caught one in the chest a couple hallways back."

"Let's get moving," Brigid replied. She and Kyle moved and caught up. Brigid and Kyle ducked behind a table and Brigid recognized a familiar form crouched behind it. "Hey asshole! Glad to see you're still alive!" A small marine with a Jackhammer on her back turned around.

"You to, you fucking bitch," Jo replied.

"Will you two cut it out?" Another, Brian, asked, "I mean, I know you two love cussing each other out, but come-on!"

"You know we love each other," Brigid answered, throwing a grenade casually over her shoulder and several death cries followed. "Now, how do we get off this rock?"

"There should be some shuttles in the hanger bay," Sarge replied, "I think we can get to those ok."

"Shall we?" Brigid asked. Jo smiled and stood up, emptying both tubes of her rocket launcher.

"Just like training," Jo answered. Brigid and Jo ducked out from behind the table. Brigid was standing and Jo was kneeling in front of her. Kyle and Brian took up kneeling and standing defensive positions on either side of the girls. Sarge turned and knelt, he had their six. The five together were unstoppable. Brigid, Jo, Kyle and Brian had all been in the same platoon since Basic training. They had gone straight there to Ku-Lita for advanced training. Brigid saw an Elite come through the door and fired several bursts at his shield, then Jo followed up with a shotgun blast that took out the weakened shield. Kyle swung his battle rifle around and fired a spurt into the chest of the Elite, it dropped to the floor dead in less than three seconds. Twenty Jackals entered through the doorway.

"Delta 2, 4!" Brian yelled. Brigid and Kyle threw grenades to the right of the Jackals, who turned their shields to protect them from the blast. Less than a second later Jo and Brian threw grenades to the opposite side and the blast hit the Jackals on their unprotected sides. Bits of them pasted the walls.

"Ew," Kyle said, "Alien guts! Gross!"

"Hm," Jo said, taking out a grunt squad, "The color looks good on you. You should wear it more often."

"Enough joking," Sarge said, "More killing."

"Yes Sergeant!" The four sounded off. Then more grunts came in. The squad may have joked around, but they were the best marines that had graduated from the academy in the past five years.

"Plasma fodder," Brigid yelled, "Dead ahead!"

"Wait!" Jo sounded off. The grunts charged. "Wait! Wait! NOW!" The four unloaded their clips at all the same time. They aimed at the same height and swept their weapons from side to side. Grunts barked and squealed as their tanks ruptured and the methane mixture they breathed vented. A plasma grenade rolled free from a few bodies, as they got close and Brigid activated it, she chose a grunt in the group and pinpointed it with her sharpened eyesight.

"Fire in the hole!" Brigid yelled. The grunt she hit with the grenade ran back towards the center of the ground and it detonated the methane pack causing a large explosion. Brigid and Jo were knocked to the ground from the shock wave of the combined methane packs and grenade supply of about forty grunts.

"Come on!" Kyle yelled. He picked up Brigid and Jo by the scruff of their collars and set them on their feet. "We have to get out of here!" Kyle and Brian shoved the two girls out of the door and lay down covering fire as they retreated.

"This way!" Sarge yelled. Brigid, Jo, Kyle and Brian all ran through the door after Sage, laying massive amounts of covering fire. They got to yet another cafeteria on the way to the hanger and ran into a Covenant blockade.

"We can't get around this," Brian said, "We're going to have to find another way to the hanger!" Brigid's mind raced at a million miles an hour, everything around her moved in slow motion as her accelerated mind raced through her memory.

"The vent system," Brigid said, walking over and jumping up on a table. "Come on, this way." Brigid pulled out a ladder that reached halfway to the floor and pulled herself up. The Covenant had not found the way into the system yet. "It's clear!" Kyle and Jo pulled themselves up followed by Brian and Sarge. It was not fast moving through the vents, and sight was poor as best. Brigid could see because of the repairs to her eye, but she would have scars on her face for the rest of her life. Brigid found an opening close to the hanger and opened the door. Covenant were only a hallway away, crowding around a blast door. Brigid made the hand signal to keep quite and stay put.

She dropped down to the floor and silently crept across the hall. She looked up as she did, every blast door was designed to hold in a corner and went through to the vent system so that anyone in the area would be kept safe, or in this case, trapped. Brigid suddenly noticed a grunt look at her and bellow in her direction. About four elites turned and Brigid made a dive for the control panel. She pushed the button and the door slammed down as the covenant began throwing their bodies against the door. Two Covenant had gotten caught in the door and their blood oozed out from between the seal.

"Yugh," Brian said.

"That should buy us some time," Sarge said, "Good thinking, now lets keep moving." Sarge held his rifle at the ready and peered around the corner. He lifted his hand and made a series of signals. Keep quiet. Move quickly. Stay low. Hold fire unless necessary. The squad nodded and turned the corner. There were three hallways and the closest one would take them to the flight hanger, three meters beyond the hallways rested a squad of grunts with two mounted plasma cannons. Brigid and Jo groaned and picked their feet up. It was a short, silent sprint, but nerve racking at the same time. Brigid turned and covered the hallways until Kyle hit her shoulder to signal the clear. Brigid turned and double-timed down the hallway, they were that much closer to the hanger, and survival.

"Move," Sarge said, waving them through the doorway.

"Clear," Jo said, "We're thirty meters from the hanger, we'll need to repel down two levels to get to the ships."

"We'll cross that bridge when we get to it," Sarge replied, "Do we have an inventory of the hanger?"

"We won't know what's been taken until we get there," Jo replied, "If we're lucky we may be able to nail a transport fighter and get to the next system."

"That's going to be our best shot," Sarge said, "Jo, you and I will pilot, Kyle your navigations, Brigid and Kyle, I want you two to take the guns as soon as we're aboard. Understood?"

"Yes Sergeant," the four barked.

"Good," Sarge replied, unslinging his rifle, "Let's move." Brigid unslung her own rifle and checked the ammo counter, she only had half a clip of ammo left in it and she wanted to keep her other weapons until they reached a safe system.

"Sarge," Brigid asked, "Permission to take Kyle and go get supplies for the field."

"Denied," Sarge said, "We'll get stuff there."

"Sergeant," Brigid said again, "All due respect, but we can still rendezvous in the hanger, we'll come out on the ground floor and we can belay the repel lines while one of us covers the hanger. The Covenant haven't worked their way into the vent systems yet and if worst comes to worst we can bail out through the internal systems. Please sergeant, we don't know how long we'll be away from UNSC. There's field supplies in the armory one level down that we'll need."

"Move," Sergeant said. Brigid smiled and hit Kyle on the arm.

"Let's go," she said. They moved quickly from hallway to hallways, sticking mostly to the bases vent systems to avoid detection. Brigid saw the armory was clear and dropped down to the floor with all the noise of a whisper. She signaled Kyle that it was clear and he fell to the ground.

"We'll need ammo," Kyle said, picked up a small crate and began throwing weapons and ammunition in. Brigid got a jackhammer and as many rounds as she could carry with spares in a box. They got a sniper rifle with a hundred rounds, and well over ten thousand rounds of battle rifle ammo. Shotguns and belts were thrown in and Brigid scrounged around for food. She threw as many MRE's (meals ready to eat) at Kyle as she could find and found a container of water, she also found twenty eight full canteens.

"This is a lot," Brigid said, "Think we can carry it?"

"We'll have to," Kyle said, "This is standard issue material and we'll need it to survive. Besides with the repairs you should be able to lift three times your own body weight."

"Right," Brigid said, strapping her rifle to her back. "Cover me." Kyle walked to the door and Brigid took hold of the massive crate, she heaved and surprisingly the thing moved. It wasn't easy, but she was able to drag it to the hanger, just as they entered three ropes hit the ground. Brigid unslung her rifle and took aim at the nearest doorway as Kyle helped everybody down.

"Damn," Sarge said, "I thought you were going for supplies, not an arsenal."

"We'll need it," Brigid said.

"Come on," Sarge said, "Let's get the ship prepped." They had to walk through three sections of the hanger before they found a ship with sufficient fighter power to blast their way off the planet.

"Three MAC guns can't stop one of their ships," Kyle commented as he put extra fuel cells in the cargo bay, "And we're going to blast out of here in THIS?"

"They think that all the humans are dead," Brigid said, "With any luck we should be able to blast through undetected and make a jump. It's a miracle we've survived this long, no reason to think we should die in a vacuum."

"Well," Kyle said, "Let's hurry. If we're going to die I want it to be quick."

"Amen," Brigid said, exploring the ship. There had already been weapons and supply caches on the ship as well as launch pods. They could probably survive for a year off of what they had brought combined with what was on the ship. Brigid's mind raced tactically, if worst came to worse they could use the ship as a base and remove the turrets to more strategic positions wherever they camped.

"Come on," Sarge called, "We're ready."

"Covenant!" Jo yelled, "Advancing on all positions. Kyle, Brigid, close the fucking ramp and GET TO THE GUNS!"

"Kyle!" Brigid screamed as he sprinted, "Kyle get over here!" She saw an elite raise his rifle and she sprayed him down with rifle fire. Brigid found a string of grenades and pulled the pin on one of them, throwing them far over Kyle's head. The explosion that followed insured dust cover and confusion. Kyle got to the ramp but took a plasma shot in the leg before he got aboard. Brigid grabbed his uniform and hauled him into the ship, closing the ramp quickly. "We're on, take off, Kyle got a leg wound before I get to the guns."

"Make it fast," Sarge said, "Then get him tied to his gun, we'll take a look at it once we're away." Brigid saw that the wound was not too serious, but plasma was still new and she wasn't sure what it did to humans. Brigid put an anti-burn gel on it and wrapped the thigh in gauze.

"That should hold," Brigid said as the ship shuttered to life and lifted off from the ground. "Come on, we have to get strapped in before we break atmosphere." Brigid threw his arm around her shoulder and got him quickly to the underbelly gun. She strapped him in and made sure they were tight.

"I'm fine," Kyle said, "Get to the top turret and get strapped in. Go!" Brigid climbed the ladder faster than she ever had in her life, she could feel the ship beginning to heat up and knew that Sarge was waiting until the last minute before firing the thrusters so that

they were strapped in. Brigid dove for the seat and quickly clicked the straps into place.

"I'm in Sarge," Brigid yelled, "Go!"

"Firing thrusters," Sarge said, "Brace yourselves!" Brigid crossed her arms over her chest and loosed her neck, the jolt could snap her neck like a twig if she tensed it. Brigid was thrown back in her seat and felt the straps cutting into her shoulder through her tee shirt. She winced for a moment and then let the pain pass.

"Enemy frigate," Jo said, "Dead ahead, beginning evasive maneuvers. Brian, start working on some jump coordinates. Kyle and Brigid, fire only when necessary and pick your shots. Here's everything we know about Covenant battle tactics and weaponry, remember they have shields and try to coordinate fire for maximum damage." Brigid targeted the nearest ship, but held her fire. Next to her a small AI appeared on the panel.

"Who are you?" The system asked.

"We can talk later," Brigid said, "I don't mean to be rude, but could you go help our navigator make a slipstream jump?" The AI was dressed in a practical battle costume with long sleeves and a skirt that came only to her knees.

"Sure thing," the AI said. She disappeared and Brigid turned back to her screen. She monitored the nearest ship, but it had not picked them up yet.

"Great ready for the jump," Sarge said, "They haven't seen us yet. Two minutes in I want everyone to get down to the cryo chamber and get prepped for sleep." Brigid nodded even though Sarge wasn't even in the room. Years of training had turned the squad into soldiers who would follow the Sarge to death if that is what was ordered of them. "Jump in five, four, three, two, one. Mark." There was a jolt and they entered slipstream space. Brigid relaxed and slipped her harness off and floated freely in the ship. She worked her way down to the bridge and looked at Brian.

"I'm going to go get Kyle," Brigid said, "His leg needs to be look at."

"I'll do it," Brian said, "Take my job." Brian floated free and Brigid took his seat. She strapped herself in and the AI presented herself.

"I am Firefly," the small form said. She wore a red dress and had wings coming out of her back.

"You're no who I saw before," Brigid commented.

"No," a voice said as the first AI Brigid saw appeared, "I am. I am Killjoy. We're the AI's here on Crimson Revenge."

"Two AI's?" Brigid said, "Isn't that a little strange?"

"Abnormal," Firefly answered, "Yes it is."

"But not considering our cargo," Killjoy said, "We'll have to destroy

the MJLONAR armor we brought for testing."

"Don't destroy it," Brigid said. "We may still have a use for it."

"Come on," Sarge said, "We have to get to Cryo."

"Wake me up when we get close to exist point," Brigid instructed the AI's, "Coming Sarge." Brigid unhooked her straps and floated down to the Cryo chamber. Kyle was already frozen and his leg was bandaged up. Jo was getting the monitors strapped on and Sarge had already opened his tube.

"Come on," Sarge said, his favorite phrase, "The hard part's over."

"Yeah," Jo said, "Now we only have to find an inhabitable planet and find a way to get UNSC all the way out here in time to save us from a Covenant patrol. That's just a walk in the park."

"Keep quiet," Sarge said, "The sooner we get in Cryo sleep the sooner we can get out of it."

"Whatever you say Sarge," Brigid said, sticking the heart monitor on her chest. She climbed in the cryotube and looked down as the lid closed automatically. She had a few seconds before the sleeping gas came in and froze her for the trip through space. Brigid could feel the winding scars that covered her body and thought of her family back home. Beauty has been a prize there and she had once been one, Brigid knew in her heart that her mother would never accept the fact that her once beautiful daughter had turned into a twisted Frankenstein. Brigid clenched her left fist for a moment and could feel when metal replaced bone, she had yet to feel the full side effects. She had no idea how she was going to feel without any modern medicine, the chance of finding a civilized planet was less the zero. Brigid knew that she would probably die, but she wasn't going to give up. Brigid relaxed and breathed deeply, letting cryosleep carry her to darkness, she only wished she could sleep through the pain.

****Well, what did you think?****

****Like it, hate it?****

****Please review, I love criticism.****

****Flames are welcome, just review.****

****Aa'menealle nauva calen ar' malta. (May your ways be green and golden.)****

****Hannon le. (Thank you)****

****Verya****

2. New Planet

Hey ****

**I'm back.**

**Read on my fellow fansâ€¦**

**(I don't own Halo and I never will)**

**One with the ficâ€¦**

Brigid slowly awoke and stepped out of her cryotube. Well, fell is more like it. For about five minutes she knelt there and retched. The fluid in her lungs was chemically designed to be regurgitated. Brigid wiped her mouth and rinsed it with the water distributor in the room. She straightened and looked around.

"Firefly," Brigid called, "Killjoy. Someone, is anyone awake?"

"Hello," Firefly said. "Glad you're awake, the others should be up soon." Brigid looked at the small fairy and almost laughed, she looked like one of the old anime girls with the skinny legs and perfect form.

"Good," Brigid said, now standing fully upright, "Think you could show me around?" Firefly laughed.

"No," she said, "But Killjoy can." Killjoy appeared and gave a bit of a smirk.

"This way," Killjoy said. She disappeared from the pedestal and a generator started to hum. A life-size image of Killjoy appeared on the floor.

"This is unusual," Brigid said.

"Oh, just wait," Killjoy said, "This entire ship is unusual."

"How so?" Brigid asked.

"It can be run by two people or as many as fifty," Killjoy said, "The weapons systems, after a few modifications, can be automated. We have three fully automated MAC guns and a laser cannon prototype. This is minus Arc missiles and other torpedoes."

"That sounds fun," Brigid said. "I also noticed a few Warthogs in the cargo hold."

"We have enough supplies to sustain three platoons in the field for eight months."

"Damn," Brigid said as Killjoy lead her around the armory.

"I've added in the weapons and supplies that you dragged aboard," Killjoy said, "Added with our regular supplies, field supplies, and yours we should be able to last on our own for 1 year, eleven months, two weeks, and five days." Brigid let out a long, low whistle and the tour continued. Brigid snagged a package of cold cereal from the kitchen and began munching on it as they walked. "I should bust you, but I'm going to let it slide."

"Just this once," Brigid said, "And maybe a few other times. We can't

be in the mess hall with this huge ship to run."

"Two people can run the ship," Killjoy said, "That includes one person and an AI. Come this way." Brigid turned and controlled to inventory the ship, then she took the bridge, Sarge joined her in a few minutes after he woke up.

"Hey McClain," he said, "What's our ETA?"

"We're set to exit slipstream in four minutes, fifteen seconds," Brigid said, "Preparing to sound alert." Brigid flipped a switch and a green light flashed three times, signaling their exit. "All hands prepare to exist slip stream."

"What class is this ship?" Sarge asked.

"It's a prototype," Brigid said, "They're not in circulation yet. Would you like to take the bridge?"

"No," Sarge said, "Jo, you got navigation?"

"Yes I do Sergeant," Jo replied, "Would you like to take the station?"

"No," Sarge replied, he grabbed on to a bar and braced himself, "I'm good right here." Brigid powered down the engines and the stars came into view. There was a little jolt as they hit some turbulence, but that was normal in slipstream jumps.

"We've exited slipstream," Jo said, "Setting coordinates." Brigid looked at her display and then put it on the large screen.

"Sarge, take a look at this," Brigid said. Jo typed in a few more keystrokes and the image flashed twice.

"We're out of UNSC limits," Jo said, "I have no idea where we are, none of the systems look familiar."

"Are there any habitable planets?" Sarge asked. He knew that they had to get out of space, this far away from UNSC they did not stand a chance against a Covenant battle ship, but on the ground they could have a chance of survival.

"This one is," Jo said, pointing to a planet on the screen, "It has more then enough atmosphere and there are no signs of intelligent life."

"Which means no Covenant," Sarge said, "Sounds good enough to me."

"Sarge," Brian said, entering the bridge, "Will all due respect, wouldn't it be better to stay here and hail UNSC?"

"We don't know where we are," Sarge said, "And we're not trained to handle such a ship in battle. This is also Covenant space, we're going to land and keep our heads low, then if we can find some landmarks we'll hail UNSC, but not before all of our other options are out. Understood?"

"Yes Sergeant," Brian replied.

"Begin landing sequence," Sarge said, "I'm going to go check on Kyle's leg wound." Everyone on the ship knew the long-term effects of plasma scoring. If the wound was bad enough Kyle could lose his leg in a matter of weeks. Plasma, if not treated properly, could corrode right through his leg and eventually into his internal system, poisoning him to death. Plasma scoring was a pretty simple matter on a military base, but this far from civilization they would have to be careful about injuries.

"ETA," Jo said, "Twenty-eight minutes till atmosphere."

"Let me know two minutes away," Sarge said. Jo acknowledged him and turned back to the navigational panel, Brian turned and went with Sarge to take care of his cousin.

"You know," Jo said, "You should be down in medical too."

"I'm fine," Brigid said, "I'm barely feeling any side-effects."

"And 'barely' is the reason why the stitches on your arm are coming undone?" Jo asked innocently.

"I'll look at them later," Brigid said.

"Here," Jo said, standing and walking over to her. "It's later." Jo produced a needle and some wire-clamps out of nowhere and removed Brigid's gauntlet. The spiraling stitches were beginning to come undone and her arm was not fully healed. Jo re-sewed the wound shut and slipped off the wire.

"Thanks," Brigid said as Jo took her seat. There was a silence between the two and they looked out over the stars that they could not recognize. "We should start sweeping the nearby systems for familiar constellations." Another stone silence filled the bridge.

"You didn't think we'd ever get off Ku-Lita," Jo asked, "Did you?"

"No," Brigid said, "I didn't think so until we were off."

"Hey," Jo said, "Come on, we're the Charlie Company Clowns. A few Covenant can't kill us."

"We're hanging by a thread, Jo," Brigid said, "There's no sign of any cities down there, but there could be a Covenant outpost or a patrol coming by soon. Chances are we're not going to outlast the supplies, or at least I'm not."

"Oh shut up," Jo said, "You'll make it. Ok, the side effects are going to be hard, but they'll be manageable. You survived the surgery and you're not crippled. Now stop being so depressing."

"Sorry," Brigid said, "It's just. I know I can never go back." Brigid ran a hand over her scarred face. "They'll never accept me no matter how much I should succeed."

"Hey," Jo said, turning in her chair so that she was facing Brigid. "Look at me. They were never going to accept you. They never have and

they never will, deal with that and keep going. I hate to be frank, but I think that's what you need to hear right now."

"I'm all right," Brigid said, "It's just depression."

"Side-effect," Jo said, "Let's hope they don't get any stronger. How are you holding up?"

"I took some meds," Brigid said, "Don't tell anyone."

"Like I'd ever," Jo said, "We're coming up on the system." Jo radioed Sarge and told him where they were.

"Beginning burn on my mark," Brigid declared. "3, 2, 1, mark!" The engines roared as the ship slowed for entry into the atmosphere. The pressure inside the cabin greatened as they entered real gravity and the room began to heat up.

"Hull ionization," Jo said, "It's about to get bumpy."

"Cutting back rear thrusters," Brigid said, "Turning on nose engines and leveling out." The ship slowed greatly and they broke through the cloud cover. Before them was an incredible jungle display with trees hundreds of meters tall.

"Scanning area for a suitable place to land," Jo said, she downloaded the graphics to Brigid's screen, who then shows it to Sarge, who cursed.

"Damn," he said, "No break in the jungle, and we can't risk going under that canopy."

"I'll fly us around," Brigid said, "Brian, see if we have any probes to launch."

"We don't," Firefly said, "We were about to get the order in when the Covenant invaded."

"Cancel that," Brigid said. "Well, glitch number 1 has now occurred."

"On to glitch number 2," Brian answered. "I'll run a thermal scan, maybe that will show us something."

"Oi!" Kyle said, limping onto the bridge, "I saw a body of water on our way on of the starboard side. We could go there."

"Good eyes," Sarge said, turning to Brigid and Jo, "Let's go."

"Yes Sergeant," the said in unison. Jo had to keep from laughing, she remembered the first time she called Sarge "Sir." He had nearly taken her head off for pulling that movie crap, though he did point out that he would not mind being promoted to an officer position and out of Non-Com work.

"Body of water detected ahead Sarge," Jo said, "There's a break in the tree line forty meters from the shore."

"McClain," Sarge said, "I want us thirty nine meters from the water."

"Yes Sergeant," Brigid replied. She relaxed and set her hands on the controls. She exhaled and looked foreword, piloting this big ass within a meter of the tree line would be hard. Brigid maneuvered the thrusters as they came up on the lake and swung the ship around to it was parallel to the beach. She flipped off the thrusters and engaged the hover booster so fast that Sarge could barely see her hands dance over the controls. She hovered the ship and brought it just under the canopy and one meter before the undergrowth got heavy. A dull thump resounded through the ship as it gently touched down. "Landing gear down Sarge, beginning to shut down flight systems." Sarge turned to Kyle, who was manning the science station.

"Atmosphere is a combination of nitrogen, oxygen and other gasses, breathable to humans," Kyle read, "Major plant and animal life. No cities within three hundred clicks. Life forms detected, a few unknown species."

"Let's take a look around," Sarge said, "Jo and Brigid, I want you to suit up and be ready to take a Warthog out in five."

"Sarge," they said. Brigid went down and found a partial suit of MJOLNIR armor. She whistled as Jo got a jackhammer and spanker rounds in the side seat of the warthog.

"It was meant for a lower-class Spartan," Killjoy said, "And I'm the AI supposed to be in the suit."

"Well," Brigid said, flexing her false left hand, "I'm not Spartan, but I can wear that." Brigid took the helmet, chest plate, and leg guards. Those were all that could fit her, she guessed that Spartans were normally large. She smiled and moved around the little, the armor was still big and it was harder to move in then it would be if it was a suit, but it would work. She walked up to Jo.

"Hey girl," Jo said, "Cool threads."

"Like them?" Brigid joked. "I got them on sale." The two laughed and Killjoy appeared out of nowhere.

"How can you move in that?" She asked, confused. The armor would kill a normal person, but then she remembered that Brigid wasn't exactly normal anymore.

"Easy," Brigid said, "Brainwaves."

"Well," Killjoy said, mentioning the pedestal she was standing on. "Pick me up, I'm the AI for that suit." Brigid shrugged and set her hand down, letting Killjoy in her systems.

"Home again," Killjoy said, "Looks like we'll need to make some adjustments for yourâ€¦"

"I know," Brigid said, "I'm short."

"I was going to say stature," Killjoy said, "But be proud, after all, Yoda was short."

"Who the heck is Yoda?" Brigid asked as they pulled out of Crimson Revenge.

"He's a character in a really old movie," Killjoy said, "He was a little green creature less than a meter tall and he walloped a guy over six feet tall."

"I've believe it if you say it," Brigid said, "Are you recording this?"

"Of coarse," Killjoy said, "Be back, I've got to take in the tactical region for Firefly." Brigid smiled inside her helmet and grabbed the gun as they went over a bump. About a klik away they stopped and looked around. Brigid knelt down next to Jo.

"Pretty Planet," Jo said, taking a swig from her canteen, "Think it's got a name?"

"I'm sure you'll have one by time we get back," Brigid said, kneeling down and climbing into the passenger seat. "Want to go take a look around the jungle?" Brigid took her rifle and walked a few feet into the jungle. She had not gone ten feet before raising her hand and crouching, Jo was right behind her.

"What is it?" Jo whispered. Brigid pointed to the tracks in front of her and put her hand in the trench.

"Covenant," Brigid said, "Let's get out of here." Jo turned and brought her rifle to the ready as Brigid moved back to back and covered towards the jungle. They hauled back to the ship and reported in immediately.

"How many?" Sarge asked.

"Based on their tracks there were a good number of them," Jo said, "A few grunt tracks and dozens of elites."

"Blast," Sarge said, "Ready the guns. Start reinforcing the ship and I want all shields closed. Brigid nodded and began to activated the automated defenses. Brigid also brought out several fifty cal machine guns and placed them at different hallways. Jo shut down all non-essential systems and kept just enough power to fire up the engines again. They were shut down and running dark by the time the sun set over the sea. Brigid sighed, just a few hours ago they had been happily exploring the planet, now they would probably not last long enough to eve wipe the memory bank from the ship. Brigid looked out over the sea as the last rays of light disappeared.

"Jo." Brigid said as they crawled into their bunks.

"Hm?" Jo replied, half asleep.

"We're going to survive."

"If you say so," Jo said, "If we do, someone up there's got a sense of humor. Get some sleep kid, you'll need it." Brigid smiled, Jo always called her kid because of her height. Brigid turned over and snuggled into her bunk, she would need sleep if the Covenant found them, because there was no way in hell she was going down without a fight.

****Like it, hate it?****

****Please review, I love criticism.****

****Flames are welcome, just review.****

****Aa'menealle nauva calen ar' malta. (May your ways be green and golden.)****

****Hannon le. (Thank you)****

****Varya****

3. The Belegerea

Hey ****

I'm back.****

Author's Note:****

Hey peeps, this is officially my longest chapter ever. This is where most of the stuff is going to get explained. This was originally going to be spread over five chapters, but I condensed it down and got this, which I think is better. So, this is where the title gets explained, kind of. Please read this, details are important and will come up later in the story.

Read on my fellow fansâ€¦****

(I don't own HALO and I never will)****

One with the ficâ€¦****

"Brigid," Kyle said, shaking her shoulder, "Brigid, wake up."

"Huh?" Brigid asked, drowsy, "What is it?"

"Your turn on watch," Kyle said, "Sarge says that you and Jo need to get to the bridge as soon as you're up and have some food in you."

"I'm on my way," Brigid said, sitting up. As she did Brigid felt her the stitches on her ribs stretch and she clasped a hand to her side.

"You all right?" Kyle asked, half-asleep.

"Yeah," Brigid answered, "My leg's just asleep, that's all. I'll be fine in a minute." Brigid grit her teeth and straightened, then started limping towards the medical bay. Jo was already there.

"What hurts?" Jo asked.

"I'm fine," Brigid said, getting a shot of adrenaline and slipping an advanced morphine compound into her sleeve, "Just need to wake up."

"Yeah," Jo said, pulling over Brigid's left arm, "That's why your sneaking this morphine out." Brigid ripped her sleeve away.

"Sarge is going to start noticing the missing supplies," Jo said, "He's already had Firefly programmed to alert him of any medical bay entries."

"He can't know," Brigid said, "He'll put me back in cryo-sleep."

"I know," Jo said, "Here." Jo pulled up Brigid's sleeve and gave her the shot. "Firefly can't tell him if he's asleep." Jo smiled. "Come on, lets get some chow." Brigid smiled, Jo had already probably re-programmed Firefly and told Sarge that she would handle it.

"You're the best," Brigid said, pulling down her sleeve. "What's for breakfast?"

"Just grab something fast," Jo said, pulling out a biscuit, some bacon, and an egg. She slapped everything on the bread and handed it to Brigid. "Eat on the run." Brigid inhaled the food before they were even out of the kitchen. "Are you sure that you're not a black-hole in disguise?"

"Yeah," Brigid said, licking her fingers, "Black-holes bow to my power." The two went to the bridge and sent Sarge to get some sleep. The two sat and Jo materialized a deck of cards from one of her many pockets.

"Whatcha feel like?" Jo asked. "Egyptian Rat Screw, Black Jack, Rummy, Gin, or B.S.?"

"ERS," Brigid said, "We haven't played that one in a while." Jo shuffled the cards and dealt out 26 to each. They continued to play the game until a small beeping sounded on a panel.

"It's something outside," Jo said, "I'll go check it out."

"No," Brigid said, "I'm faster then you are, you can lock the ship down if I get caught." Brigid picked up a shotgun and a pistol, attaching the former to her belt as she walked out the door. She sealed it behind her and sealed her helmet. She was now wearing her full MJLONR suit, Killjoy was with her and had made the specific adjustments to the suit to fit Brigid a little better. Her shin guards had practically been cut in half to fit her frame, but they were definitely better then the hybrid of armor she had been wearing. Brigid moved silently despite the near-two-ton suit that enclosed her. Brigid opened a small panel of the ship and jumped down onto the jungle side of the ship. Killjoy showed the location of the disturbance on her HUD and she turned right toward the end of the ship. Along the way Brigid kept her back to the ship and her eyes towards the woods, she wasn't about to get caught with her pants down by a squad of Covenant. She was alerted when her back was just over the disturbance and cocked the weapon.

"Killjoy," Brigid asked, "Are my motion sensor's in place?"

"Yes," Killjoy replied, "One sec, I'll activate them." Brigid felt a hum near the power cell on her back and a small circle came up on her HUD. "You're covered." Brigid slung her weapon and turned to the panel.

"Kiilljoy," Brigid said, "Record this." Brigid opened a channel to Jo's headset. "Jo, I need to fix something. I'll call in when I'm on my way back."

"Is it plasma scoring?" Jo asked.

"Doesn't look like it," Brigid, "Not at least any scoring that I've ever seen. Looks like something that happened entering the atmosphere." Brigid ran her hand over the gash, if it was a plasma sword it was a weak one, it had barely penetrated the outer layer of steel. Brigid took a welding tool from her belt and closed the gap quickly. She felt something move behind her the moment she set the welding tool back in her belt and spun with her rifle at the ready. She slowly began sidestepping toward the open ship and flicked her rifle from side to side, trusting her eyes more than her instruments. She walked slowly and silently towards the forest, not wanting to disturb a twig if she needed to start running.

Brigid used her shotgun to nudge aside a branch and look into the dense foliage. She crept closer and something moved to her right. Brigid back-flipped away and kneeled, her rifle aiming directly at a Covenant Elite, who was holding two plasma pistols at the level of her head. Brigid, for some reason or another, waited. She did not fire at the Elite, he was not firing back at her. Brigid took this time to really look at the Elite, the armor he wore was different colored, almost like it had been scrounged from other bodies. Brigid watched the Elite for a few more moments and then lowered her shotgun.

"Brigid," Jo asked through her com-link, "Brigid are you all right?"

"Fine," Brigid said, "I just need to check something out."

"Are you insane?" Killjoy asked, the Elite lowered his own weapons, "Why aren't you shooting him!"

"Because he's not shooting us," Brigid replied. "Open a channel so that I can talk to him."

"I cannot believe I'm doing this," Killjoy said, "Channel open."

"Do you speak English?" Brigid asked. The elite nodded. "Sorry if this is a strange question, but why aren't you shooting me?"

"What have to done to me?" The elite asked. "There has been no fault here."

"Um," Brigid said, "Gee, how do I say this, the Covenant hate humans." The elite flinched a mandible, but said nothing. "Well, you kind of destroyed my planet, that's why we're here."

"Did the Covenant follow you?" The elite asked.

"You're the only Covenant we know existed," Brigid said, slinging her weapon, "But I don't understand."

"Come with me," the elite said, "I doubt you will believe me unless you follow." The elite turned and began walking into the dense jungle. Brigid took one step foreword.

"ARE YOU INSANE?" Killjoy practically screamed. "You should be shooting that covenant bastard, not making friends! They call you a super soldier and a Spartan€|."

"Killjoy," Brigid said, interrupting the rant, "KILLJOY!" The spunky AI silenced. "I don't think that he's Covenant."

0.0 ifÿ Killjoy

The elite said nothing as they walked through the forest. Brigid scanned the area as she walked and Killjoy was taking video footage and uploading it directly to Firefly should this turn out to be nothing but a trap.

"Where are we going?" Brigid asked.

"My camp," the elite replied.

"I'm going to need more than that," Brigid said, "If you're not Covenant then who are you?"

"We're The Belegerea, the Resistance," the elite said, "Like I said before, you probably will not believe me since our races have long been at war. Still, we exist." He led her through thicker foliage and Brigid still had trouble moving so soon after her surgery, she almost stumbled a few times, but always caught herself. Brigid followed the strange elite until she heard a waterfall crashing against the rocks in the distance. "My name is Oren," he said, "I am a leader among my people. You will not be harmed. Come, if you are here it is not by chance and there is much to discuss."

What Brigid saw as she approached the top of the waterfall astounded her. Below was, what appeared to be, a Covenant Colony. Her eyes took in grunts, elites, and about six hunters. Brigid knew enough about military tactics that, if they ever got angry at the squad in the ship, they would not survive for long.

"Jo," Brigid said into her com-link, "Update: I am not hurt in any way and I am not in captivity. I will be back when I can make it and will give you periodical updates. Brigid out." Brigid did not give Jo a chance to respond, Jo would have locked on to Brigid's position and come after her as fast as a warthog could go. Brigid opened an outer channel. "What do you do here?"

"We survive," Oren said, "And with us we carry the truth of Halo and of our people. How the Covenant came about, and the treachery of the Prophets."

"What's a Prophet?" Brigid asked. "And what's a Halo?"

"It is a holy Hierarch of the Covenant, Halo is an artificial world that was built by an ancient and extinct race to contain certain predators," Oren answered as they walked down into the camp, "And the Prophets ate the reason there is galactic war. Here we sneak out spies into High Charity and slowly whisper the truth into those who will listen to reason. Belegerea has existed longer than the Covenant. We have tried to speak with humans, but most times they shoot our spies before our message can be delivered."

"We do not know much about your culture," Brigid said as they reached the bottom of the hill. "We only know of the Covenant, and they aren't the most forthcoming of people."

"We should not speak until we are safely inside," Oren said, "There are not any spies that we know of in the system, but I would not trust even those in our company." Brigid remained silent, but continued to record the images that she was seeing for Jo and Sarge. Killjoy was still whispering in her ear exactly what mental state she thought Brigid was in.

"Look Killjoy," Brigid said, she appeared to remain silent since a channel had not been opened. "If you disapprove of the situation, next time don't tag along." Killjoy continued to mumble but remained nearly silent. Brigid looked around as they walked through the camp. It seemed as though everyone there was a warrior or a warrior in training. She saw women armed with plasma swords guarding borders of the camp and several other warriors guarding different structures. Brigid was surprised by the efficiency of the camp. Oren led her through and brought her to the second largest buildings in the camp. Brigid felt wary as the door sealed behind her and two guards came with her. She was led before a chair, which was taken by one of the oldest elites she had seen, he had to be ancient, and a formidable warrior to have survived so long. He sat on his chair like one who did not wish to be in such a place of honor, he looked like he would be more at home on a battlefield smashing his plasma sword into whatever got in his way. Oren bowed low to the elite and Brigid nodded in her head in respect.

"You have returned Oren," the elite said, "And brought this with you."

"I am Private First Class McClain," Brigid said, "My squad was stranded on this planet when ours was destroyed by the Covenant."

"I am a former Zealot General of the Covenant," the elite said, "Now I am known only as Covesash, it means One who broke the Covenant. Oren, please report."

"It is as McClain has stated," Oren said, standing, "their ship rests on the edge of the jungle and they have not made any aggression towards our troops."

"I will speak with McClain alone," Covesash said. The three guards bowed and Oren took his leave through a different side door. "You have much to tell me." Covesash said, standing. He picked up a walking stick and motioned for her to approach the dais before her. Brigid moved cautiously and looked up into the blue eyes of the elite standing before her. "Walk with me, you must have many questions." Brigid left her shotgun in the chamber and Covesash led her through a back door into a long corridor. "This is the chronicle of our people, the true cronicle handed down through generations of underground resisters that have tried to usurp the Covenant since it's existence." Brigid watched as the lights came up and illuminated several tapestries on the wall. "In the beginning the Prophets attacked the Sanghelli and the wars continued on for centuries. Then the Prophets clouded the minds of our forefathers with tales of wonderful worlds called Halos. These worlds would purge the galaxy of evil, which the Prophets called your race. The Prophets knew that they would have eventually lost the war if they had not allied

themselves with us. They said that you were the greater of threats and that we should defeat them. From the beginning there has been a resistance against the Covenant made between the Prophets and the Sanghelli. Later more races joined the Covenant, and more joined our ranks. One day we found one of these Halos and discovered the truth behind the structure. The Forerunners were destroyed by Halo after they could not find a way to defeat the parasite that lived on the Halos. So, till this day we stay alive and lead those who will listen to reason away from the oppression of the Prophets."

Brigid stared up at the tapestry, she had no idea that the culture of the Covenant went as deep as it did. She had no expression on her face as Covesash told her more about Belegerea and how they had come to that planet. Killjoy was still recording the data and could retrieve it if necessary. Covesash took Brigid to a garden and they stood talking for quite a while. Then Oren entered and called Covesash to a call from the nearby pedestal. While he was calling Brigid called Jo.

"Jo," Brigid said, "Jo, you there? Helloâ€¦anybody?"

"McClain!" Sarge snapped. Brigid winced at the worry in Sarge's voice. "Where in the hell are you."

"Wouldn't believe me if I told you Sarge," Brigid said, looking around the garden.

"You do know that you've been gone for almost twenty hours," he said, "Brian and Kyle have been sweeping the perimeter and the jungle ever since you didn't call in. In that light, what the hell were you thinking, traipsing off like that! You KNOW better than to just walk off in the woods."

"Sarge," Brigid groaned, "I'll be back when I can, then I'll give you a full report and Killjoy can download the images so that you'll have some proof." Covesash finished his call and began walking slowly back to Brigid. "I've got to go, I'll call in when I can. I'm fine, don't worry about me, and call back Kyle and Brian, they need to stay in the ship."

"McClain don't you even think aboutâ€¦" Brigid cut the feed from her channel and Killjoy decided to make yet another appearance.

"I could upload the images now," she said.

"Yeah," Brigid said, "But then he'd make a Pelican drop on the camp and get torn to shreds. Lets stay here a little longer."

"I still don't see why you're trusting them," Killjoy said, "That communication could be an order to execute you."

"I don't think so," Brigid said, "Don't ask me how I know, but they're telling the truth." Covesash stood next to her.

"Do your people search the beach and surrounding jungle for you?" He asked.

"Yes," Brigid said, "They do."

"Oren," Covesash said, "Order the scouts not to fire on the humans,

they mean us no harm."

"I should return soon," Brigid said, "If they think that you have captured me they will attack."

"They would never get past our defenses," Covesash said, "We have prepared this place in the event that an onslaught of Covenant forces should discover us."

"You will have to ask Sarge about the time I was captured on Terran IV," Brigid said, "He got past eight Covenant battalions to break me out of there." Brigid was led to another room and invited to eat. Killjoy quickly ran a scan.

"There's no trace of poison," Killjoy said.

"Thanks mom," Brigid whispered, unlocking her helmet, "Want to chew it for me to?" Brigid removed her helmet and stripped back the black suit she wore beneath it from her face. Covesash froze for a moment before finishing setting out the meal.

"You have a smaller build then originally thought," Covesash said, "And you must have seen much battle." Brigid's eyes fell and lost their life-filled sparkle at the mention of her scars, it made her wish for the blessed covering of her helmet. "Have I offended you?"

"No," Brigid said, sniffing slightly and wiping a tear from her eye. "Just something in my eye." Covesash said nothing. But the way he stood suggested that he didn't believe her. The food put out was strange, but it was also very delicious. Brigid complimented Covesash on the meal., but he waved it off.

"I could never make Toprikla like my late wife," Covesash said as a young female cleared the plates. "Please, meet my daughter, Nã|la."

"Greetings," Nã|la said, making a small bow.

"Hello," Brigid said, standing. "I'm Brigid, it's nice to see some girls around here."

"There is a shortage of male warriors," Nã|la said, "That is why the females must be trained."

"Laksh," Covesash said, "We train females because of their excellence in espionage. The Covenant do not let their females become warriors, but it is mostly females who prepare and serve food, do the house work, and have higher clearance then some generals. Nã|la here is one of our best, we keep her behind to train the others." Brigid smiled and slid her helmet back on over her head, clicking the locks into place.

"Well," Brigid said, "I should be getting back to my squad."

"We would be honored if you brought them to meet us," Covesash said, standing.

"I'll see what I can do," Brigid said, "But their hate for the Covenant won't be easy to overcome. May I have your permission to

show them some recordings that I took on the way in?"

"Thank you, and granted," Covesash said, "I was hoping to make some allies with the humans, if it were possible we could overthrow the prophets faster if we worked together."

"I know," Brigid said, "I will try. I know that one of my company would join me."

"I will send Oren and Nã|la with you," Covesash said, "They will speak for me." Almost on cue Oren entered and handed Brigid her weapon.

"This is an interesting weapon," Oren said, "Forgive me, but I took the liberty of examining it while you rested."

"Thanks," Brigid said. They did not talk on their way out of the camp, though Oren and Nã|la were both fully armed. Oren led the small group back towards the ship. Brigid was surprised by how little they talked, she could understand if they were nervous so far away from their people. It took them almost four hours to get back to the ship in the darkness. Brigid peered through the trees and saw the flood lights from the ships. "Killjoy, open a channel to the ship."

"Open," Killjoy said.

"Sarge," Brigid said, "Open the back, we've got friendlies coming in."

"Then why are two armed Covenant escorting you?" Sarge asked, "We're opening up with a fifty-cal!" Brigid held out her hand and halted the two Covenant with her.

"What is it?" Nã|la asked.

"I'm talking to my ship," Brigid said, "Sarge, open the back door and please don't be armed, hurting these two would make the colony four hours away very unhappy." Brigid smiled as the back door opened and Jo stood there with a rifle slung over her shoulder.

"Brigid," she said, running down the ramp and giving her a hug, "You bastard, don't scare me like that!"

"I'm sorry," Brigid said, "I don't think you'd believe me if I told you what happened."

"Well get inside," Jo said, "All of you. Sarge is going to tan your hide when he sees you." Brigid set her weapon on the rack and motioned for Oren and Nã|la to do the same. The two set their rifles on the rack, but Oren kept his pistol and Nã|la kept her plasma sword. The two followed Brigid into the ship as Kyle and Brian appeared out of nowhere.

"BRIGID!" They yelled, tackling her.

"Ouch," Brigid said as the strain on her ribs greatened. "Ow, ow, ow, ow, ow, OW, OW, OW!" They backed off and smiled.

"We were worried," Kyle explained, sheepishly.

"I noticed," Brigid said, "Lets get to the common area so I can introduce our guests." Brigid led the group into the common area where there were couches as well as a display center. The tension in the room was high, everyone carried some form of weapon and Brigid could tell that Sarge was acting against this better judgment. Brigid took off her helmet and set Killjoy down on a pedestal, Firefly soon joined her.

"Hey," she said, wrapping her arm around her 'twin', "Have fun?"

"Humans are really idiotic sometimes," Killjoy said, "Hey! Want to see the footage."

"Yeah, in a sec Killjoy," Brigid said, sitting with her helmet on her knee. "Well, no questions till I'm finished." Brigid recounted her story of how she came in contact with Belegerea and, just as she thought, Sarge didn't believe her until Killjoy showed the footage of the colony and of Covesash talking with her in the garden.

"I'm still not sure," Sarge said, "No offense with given company, but how can I be sure that this isn't just a Covenant plot."

"I can speak for my father," Oren said, "We hate the Covenant, and we always will."

"I didn't know Covesash was your father," Brigid said to Oren. Oren turned to her and nodded. "Hm."

"As I was saying," Oren said, "We are not Covenant. Um, excuse me, Killjoy?" The AI looked up at smiled, Oren looked befuddled on how to address the machine. "Would you lease show the footage of the tapestries." Firefly, now in control of the program, waved a hand through the air and froze an image from Brigid's suit.

"These thingies?" Firefly asked. Oren nodded and Firefly lowered her arm. Covesash's voice rang through the room.

"This is the chronicle of our people, the true chronicle handed down through generations of underground resisters that have tried to usurp the Covenant since it's existence." Brigid watched as the lights came up and illuminated several tapestries on the wall. "In the beginning the Prophets attacked the Sanghelli and the wars continued on for centuries. Then the Prophets clouded the minds of our forefathers with tales of wonderful worlds called Halos. These worlds would purge the galaxy of evil, which the Prophets called your race. The Prophets knew that they would have eventually lost the war if they had not allied themselves with us. They said that you were the greater of threats and that we should defeat them. From the beginning there has a been a resistance against the Covenant made between the Prophets and the Sanghelli. Later more races joined the Covenant, and more joined our ranks. One day we found one of these Halos and discovered the truth behind the structure. The Forerunners were destroyed by Halo after they could not find a way to defeat the parasite that lived on the Halos. So, till this day we stay alive and lead those who will listen to reason away from the tryney of the Prophets." Firefly cut the image just as Brigid would have walked outside.

"So," Oren said, "As you can see, we are by no means, Covenant."

"And I would not suggest the we are near the colony," Nã|la said, "A less passionate warrior will let you go with a warning, but those who do not know that you are foreign will probably assault and kill you for the insult."

"Covesash wishes to meet all of you," Brigid said, "He feels that if the forces of the resistance allies with the humans the war could be over years before anyone planned. They have Coveant technology that could boost the speed of researchers by years and they wouldn't have to rely on scrounged material that's been fouled in battle. It makes perfect logic, besides, if the x Covenant did follow us we stand a better chance with them then on our own."

"I don't know," Sarge said, "I'm going to need some more proof." Oren stood and nodded to Nã|la.

"I think that this will be all the proof you need," she said, unhooking her brother's chest plate.. When Nã|la stepped aside the whole room gasped. Branded into Oren's chest was a strange mark with two slashes through it. "This is the mark of shame, it was branded into both of us when our father left the Covenant. We were both children at the time. Covesash himself is not branded, they made him watch." Brigid lowered her head, the scars on her face mirrored nothing of the pain carried in Oren's eyes.

"My father has yet to forgive himself," he said, "Now perhaps you will believe us."

"It's enough for me," Sarge said, "I don't know about being friends, but I'll meet this guy."

"Well," Kyle said, "We should at least find out. It's only been a day since we got here and we don't know if the Covenant followed us. Our chances deffinetly lie in numbers."

"Hell," Brian said, "I just want to check out your weapons. I always thought that their plasma weapons kick ass." Jo laughed and everyone looked at her, she was the only one who had not said anything.

"One second," Jo said, crossing her hands over her chest, "I am receiving word from on high. And the word is why the hell not, I have nothing else to do." Brigid laughed and suddenly realized just how tired she really was after being up for almost a day. She yawned.

"Wow," Brigid said, "I beat. I think I'm going to get out of this armor and take a nap, or I can sleep in the warthog if your guys want to leave now."

"That would probably be best," Oren said, "Covesash will be worried if we do not come back tonight."

"We can take some supplies in the warthog," Jo said, "If we end up spending time there we'll have food and ammo."

"What about warthog tracks?" Brian asked. "If the Covenant did follow us they could use those to track us."

"We'll guide you a few klicks from the colony," Oren said, "They will be cautious if they do not know what they are going into. Besides, our scouts would alert us the moment a ship landed."

"No," Nã|la said, "He's right, it is too dangerous to leave tracks. I'll alert a scout and he can send a hover transport from the colony. Firefly, will you show me out of the ship?" Nã|la stood and walked outside the ship, lead by the life-size version of Firefly.

"What is we just piloted this thing into the forest?" Sarge asked.

"Sarge," Brigid said, "I doubt even you are that good. The ship will stay here, we can always come back and move it."

"The transport will be here in twenty minutes," Nã|la said from the doorway, "I suggest that you get ready."

"Firefly," Sarge said, "Shut down the ship and make sure the reactor is completely cool. Brian, get a standard weapon check and secure the armory. Jo, I want medical supplies for our people and a few foodstuffs. Kyle make sure we have field radio's and go into the security system, I want a rig so that we can lock it down and open it by remote. Brigid, get your armor ready and take care of the AI's. Everybody got a job?" All four nodded.

"Yes sergeant!" They said in unison.

"Dust off in nineteen," Sarge said, "You know the drill, get moving people." The four marines jumped up and started moving.

"Quite an efficient team you've got," Oren said, "We may request your aide in training the new recruits and young warriors."

"Careful what you wish for," Brigid said, taking Killjoy off the pedestal and sliding her into her suit, "He's hell when you put him in 'drill sergeant' mode."

"Drill Sergeant?" Nã|la asked, turning toward her brother, "Is that like a Junai?"

"Must be," Oren asked, "I guess we'll find out." Fifteen minutes later the transport got there and Brigid began to load it up. They took some weapons that Oren had liked, foodstuffs in case someone didn't like the food there, even though Brigid had found it very enjoyable, and locked down the ships.

"Well," Firefly said, sounding lonely, "I hope we'll be back soon."

"We will," Killjoy replied, "Don't worry, nothing will happen to her." Brigid smiled. They finished loading up and got on the transport. Brigid smiled on the ship as they pulled away and then fell asleep on the transport, when she woke up her armor had been removed as she was lying on a mat. She sat up and looked around, there was a light through the door and walked through it. Jo was leaning against the archway and looking in on the room, a glass of green liquid in her hand.

"Hey," Brigid said as Sarge and Covesash talked in the other room, "How long have I been out?"

"Meh," Jo said, "About twenty-two hours. You were exhausted."

"What's going on?" Brigid asked.

"It took Sarge and Covesash about five minutes to become friends," Jo said, "He's already asked us to join the Belegerea. Killjoy and Firefly have been integrated into the security systems and are working on teaching the Belegerea AI more advanced programming. Our ship is going to be moved to their hanger and they've arranged apartments for each of us with a guide until we can find our way around."

"Where are Brian and Kyle?" Brigid asked.

"They're talking with Oren and their Quarter Master," Jo said, "They want to work on merging the technologies to make them stronger. Brian's already working on a schematic to refit the Crimson Revenge with plasma cannons and shield generators."

"Sounds fun."

"They're also talking about mixing your armor with theirs," Jo said, "They talking about an invisibility pack, shield generator, and light to the point we can wear it."

"That sounds really fun," Brigid said, "Is there anything else going on?"

"Nã|la wants to teach us to be spies," Jo continued, "Covesash wants us to contact UNSC and convince them that Belegerea exists, and he also wants us to start fighting and see if we can lead a few open fights against the Brutes, Jackals and the other races who oppose them."

"Well," Brigid said, "That's not a lot to do at all."

"Practically nothing," Jo replied with a chuckle. The two remained silent for a few minutes. "How's your arm doing?" Brigid raised her twisted left arm and flexed her new hand.

"Fine," she replied, "It hasn't hurt since I came here."

"It's the water," Nã|la said, coming up a ramp on the left. "For some reason the water here contains an unknown compound that speeds up healing. Our scientists haven't been able to identify it yet."

"Killjoy will want a sample," Brigid said.

"She's already analyzing it," Nã|la said, "She insisted upon it as soon as she entered the system."

"Doesn't surprise me," Brigid said, "So, what are we doing?" Jo shrugged.

"As of right now," Jo said, "Nothing."

"Would you wish to settle into your permanent apartments?" Nã|la asked, "After that you could inspect your ship or visit the training area."

"Sounds good," Jo said, "Let's go." Brigid smiled and lifted herself off the wall, life with the Belegerea was going to be good.

Ok, I know it was long and semi-boring. But action's coming up. Promise.

Aa'menealle nauva calen ar' malta. (May your ways be green and golden.)

Hannon le. (Thank you)

Vera

4. Assignment: High Charity

**Hey **

**I'm back.**

**Read on my fellow fansâ€|**

**(I don't own HALO and I never will**)

**On with the ficâ€|**

Brigid crouched low in the brush, her squad behind her. This squad was very different then the one she had fled Ku-Lita with two years ago. Behind her crouched four elites with rifles at the ready. Brigid smiled, she had hand-picked the team for just this operation. Jo was on the other side of the clearing with her squad and the snipers. Brigid raised her head a little and repositioned the beam rifle on her back. She poked her head over the bush and peered at the ship a fifty meters away. She smiled, the Covenant weren't even trying to hide their presence. She held up two fingers and signaled the squad foreword twenty meters, just on the edge of the forest.

"Jo can take out those Brutes with her sniper rifle," Killjoy said in Brigid's helmet. Brigid smiled.

"Yeah," Brigid said, "But there are also quite a few Sanghelli, and we really don't want to take those out."

"They're Covenant," Killjoy replied matter-of-factly.

"They were Sanghelli before they were Covenant," Brigid said, "We'll lure the Brutes away and kill them quietly, then take the Sanghelli and grunts hostage." Brigid slid down the small hill and faced her squad.

"Nã|la," she said, "Joë'e, lure the Brutes out here and kill them quietly. Lidãso, get Jo's squad up on the radio and tell them to get the stun nets ready for the ones we keep alive. Move." Nã|la and Joë'e activated their camo packs and disappeared, a slight shimmer was the only sign that they were moving. Brigid unslung her rifle and

used the scope to see her team. One of them took a plasma grenade right off one of the Brutes belt and it began rolling across the ground. The Brute stood and began lumbering after it. She saw a bush move and the Brute was swallowed into the forest. Then she saw the Brute stand up and summon the rest of the Brutes over with it's paw. The next moment the other five Brutes disappeared and she did not see them come out. Nā|la and Joë'e returned with orange blood on their green armor.

"Complete," Nā|la reported, "The starboard side of their ship is vulnerable." Brigid slung her rifle and grabbed the stun net. It was a heavy metal net with a charge running through it that could send shocks against their enemies and temporarily paralyze them.

"OK," Brigid said, "Lets go." Brigid and her squad climbed over the rise and activated the camo packs. Sanghelli were harder to fool, and any one that got loose could free his comrades while they struggled with the nets. "Keep quiet and get them all." Across the way Brigid could see Jo's squad activate their packs and disappear. Brigid crept close to them and powered up her energy net, moving even slower as they got closer. Brigid crouched and waited until Jo was in position, three seconds later she threw the energy net around the group nearest to her and quickly kicked another Sanghelli under the falling metal. She showed herself soon after to create confusion while her squad quickly stunned the rest of them. Oren piloted out a hover transport with Brian and Kyle on it.

"Well done," Oren said, "Nā|la, lets go." Nā|la and Oren took the ship and began warming it up, Kyle ran inside to help them while Brian helped lock the Sanghelli and grunts into the transport in cuffs.

"Let's get out of here," Brigid said, raising her wrist radio to her mouth, "Everyone back to the transport, we're leaving for the Revenge."

"What about these?" A Sanghelli asked, kicking a Jackal.

"Destroy the Jackals," Brigid said, "We don't have enough room for them, the others will remain alive." The Jackals screamed as each was shot once in the head and their weapons removed. Brigid threw the last Sanghelli into the transport.

"Heretic," the gold-clad Sanghelli screamed, "I will eat your innards as my breakfast."

"Ooh," Brian said, "We got a talker." Brigid removed her helmet and set her foot up on the transport, looking the Zealot in the eye.

"Look," Brigid said, "I could let you rave and talk to my superiors about your execution or you can make it easy on yourself and keep quiet." The zealot looked at the human in front of him and growled.

"I will destroy you," the Covenant said, "And all of your pitiful kind." The squad looked at Brigid, expecting death to come on all levels to the zealot before her.

Brigid just laughed and kicked the binding as if to say that he was

the one in handcuffs. "Whatever." The squad laughed as Brigid climbed up on the transport with her squad. "Let's get moving." Brigid closed the gate and they took off, they would rendezvous with Crimson Revenge in high orbit. Each person was locked into the transport, they would have to keep relying on the hover transports until they could finish the Crimson Revenge, but this mission had been critical and could not have been delayed.

"Seal your suits," The pilot said. Brigid sealed her suit and then sealed the containment pods so that their prisoners would survive undamaged. The ride was a little bumpy but as they cleared the atmosphere, but then the open-cover transport was a still and beautiful ride. It had been tricky to get the harnesses on the ship, but the transports could now clear the atmosphere in low altitude and made them a valuable asset since almost a platoon of grunts could stand with plasma cannons on the transport and take out a scorpion just by sheer numbers. "Docking in twentyâ€¦"

"Hang on to your ass," Brigid said as Jo grabbed the rail, the last mission her harness had malfunctioned and they'd nearly lost her.

"Got it," Jo replied. Out of nowhere the Crimson Revenge appeared above them in all her glory. The Crimson Revenge was not the great, state-of-the-art ship it had been; it was better, much better. The Crimson Revenge, known mostly as just "Revenge," was now a hybrid between a Covenant Cruiser and a UNSC Battleship.

Revenge now had a rounded nose and was composed of white alloy that the Covenant used. The old steel part encased the MAC guns, which could fire three rounds at a time. A few Arc Missile pods had been replaced with particle beam transmitters and shield generators. The only thing left to do was outfit it with a grav.

lift so they didn't need vulnerable transports. The pilot docked the ship and they got off; Kadale, Brigid's superior officer, was already waiting for them.

"Colonel," Brigid said, "Mission complete."

"Well Done Lieutenant Colonel," he said, "The ship is yours. Let's go home." Brigid smiled and walked quickly through new passageways to the bridge. Firefly was there and keeping the crew in line, not that they needed it. This crew had been picked from the Belegerea ranks by Covesash. There was a crew of fifty now dedicated to the up-gradeing and up-keeping of the Crimson Revenge. Brigid smiled as everyone in the room snapped to attention.

"At ease," Brigid said, everyone sat down and went back to work. Brigid sat in the captain's chair and set her helmet down. "Take her out, enter slipstream and come out near home. Let's go."

"Engines online," the navigator said, "Breaking atmosphere." The ship sqiveled around, Brigid felt the slight tug of G-force and relaxed.

"Hey," Jo said, grabbing onto a railing. Her helmet was off and her hair had grown out below her shoulders. "We going home?" Brigid nodded. Jo flexed her hand. "You know, even after a year-and-a-half I'm still not used to this." Brigid smiled. The Belegerea had done

some very nice work on the MJLONIR Armor and created somewhere between theirs and the UNSC design so now everyone could wear them. The armor was green and had the Covenant chest plate, fore-arm guards, and leg guards, everything else on the armor was UNSC. All except the helmet, the helmet had two prongs off the back like a Covenant helmet as well as a single line coming down the face. The only difference was that two black shields covered their eyes and, for humans, their faces. Brigid's mouth twitched when she remembered Sarge's first reaction to the new armor, he had said: 'Cool.'

"Coming around," the pilot said, "Heading 0-2-9, going home."

"All ahead full," Brigid said. "Clearance approved, we are go for slipstream." Jo took the second seat in and closed the arms over her lap to keep from flying across the room. Brigid clutched her chair arms and clanked them down to keep her in the seat.

"Acknowledged," the pilot said, "Entering slipstream on my mark. Everyone lock down and prepare for slipspace entry." The voice sounded throughout the ship and a red light flash three times. "Mark." The ship accelerated and the stars around them lengthened, Brigid felt herself being push back into her armor and her head tilted against the seat. She smiled and relaxed, they were on their way.

"Crew can stand down," Brigid said, "Jo, lets get the hell out of this armor." Brigid and Jo went to the officer's quarters and began stripping off the plate armor.

"I'm glad they redesigned this," Jo said, "It was hell getting out of the old stuff."

"That is true," Brigid said, "Plus, this stuff is a hell of a lot more comfortable."

"Fuck yeah," Jo said. She walked over to a communication pad and waved her left hand over a scanner. That was another new addition to the Crimson Revenge, the Belegerea had developed a scanner that was implanted into the hand and would not let anyone access all of the systems without a clearance chip. A screen popped out of the wall and Jo entered her code, patching through to Nã|la on the Covenant cruiser. "Yo, Nã|la, you guys out there?"

"Yeah," Nã|la answered, "We had some house cleaning chores, but we're on the way."

"Are you in slipstream?" Brigid asked.

"Just entered," Oren answered, "We're about a minute behind you."

"What kind of cleaning?"

"Just a few brutes," Nã|la answered, "And we captured two Sanghelli."

"Are you sure that's all the troops?" Jo asked.

"Yup," Oren answered, "We'll see you back at base mother hen." Jo

closed off the communication channel and the pad disappeared back into the wall. Brigi sighed and fell back against her bunk, closing her eyes and resting.

"Wake me up when we're home," Brigid said. She let go and fell into the world of dreams. Brigid walked slowly through her mind and it was as if her past was layed out before her. Brigid put a hand to her head, cursing silently. The compound in the water of the base also had another side effect, it opened the mind and increased brain power. Jo had run tests on the team ever since, they were now using almost twenty-five percent of their brains, more than normal humans. Covesash had told her of the dreams that they often had where they would see things in their past. They called it a Weh OsÃ|le, or a Past Vision.

Brigid cursed loudly as her mind carried her through the painful past. She dreamed of her childhood when her perfect sister Rebecca got everything while the young, tom-boy Brigid was only given dolls in an attempt to tame her. She remembered her grandfather teaching her how to shoot; first a bow and arrow and then later rifles and shotguns. Brigid remembered meeting her sister's heart throb in a fight and becoming his best friend. She remembered pushing foreword in school and skipping both the ninth and tenth grade, Brigid had been a junior at fifteen. She remembered her 16th birthday party when her best friend Michel, who happened to be Rebecca's crush, kissed her and asked her to the senior prom. Brigid smiled in her dream; that was one thing she could always hold over her perfect, blonde, dense, ditsy, graceful, damsel-in-distress, future trophy-wife sisterâ€| she had gotten Prom Queen and the hottest boy in the school. Brigid's mind stepped foreword again to basic training, just four years later and after Michael had dumped her for someone who could be in the same galaxy, and she began to shiver. The memory still haunted her, she prayed that someone would wake it up, but no one did. She saw herself as one of the best volunteers, the only other girl in her platoon, and the best squad. She remembered getting her orders that transferred her to Ku-Lita and her training, then everything became darker. Brigid suddenly felt someone shaking her awake.

"Brigid," Jo said, "Brigid, wake up! You're clutching your arm again." Brigid was curled up on her side, her right arm curled around the mangled remains of her left. Brigid sighed and sat up. "Dreams again?" Brigid nodded. "Weh OsÃ|la?" Brigid nodded again.

"I need to talk to Covesash about a way to avoid those," Brigid said. "How far out are we?"

"We're just going through landing procedures," Jo said, "Covesash wants a report, and he has a new mission."

"OK," Brigid said, standing, "Lets go make sure our prisoners get off." Brigid slipped her armor back on and snapped her helmet into place. She walked down to the brig and saw the Sanghelli moping in a corner, the zealot was talking in a hushed voice.

"Translating and magnifying sound waves," Killjoy said automatically. Brigid listened to the plot and chuckled to herself.

"Can you translate me?" Brigid asked.

"Sure," Killjoy said.

"Air ducts won't work," Brigid said in the Sanghelli language, "I have them rigged to pressure sensitivity." The Sanghelli turned and growled. "Don't look at me like that, we both know the Prophets are pathetic bitches who are far too weak to support themselves, that's why they need us. We'll need you to remove your helmets when we get off." Brigid turned without a word and clanked away over the metal grates. She walked quickly through the docking platform and gave extra instructions to make sure that the Sanghelli were guarded. Then Jo quickly led the way back through the camp to Covesash's office.

"Brigid," Covesash said, "Mission successful?"

"As usual," Brigid replied

"I have another assignment for you and a special squad," Covesash said. "You must infiltrate this base and crash their files of the Belegra so that they are in darkness. This will also effect their security systems, their greatest asset."

"When do we depart?" Brigid asked.

"You, Nã|la, Orean, and Kidska will take Spear to these coordinates in three hours," Covesash said, "You have two hours to eat and relax before your berifing."

"Thank you," Brigid said, bowing. She left and went to the detention center, Nã|la was already there.

"Hello," Nã|la said, "You want to work on the Sanghelli and telling them the truth?"

"Might as well," Brigid said, "Is that zealot in solitary?" Nã|la nodded. "I'll take him." Brigid waved her hand in front of the new electronic eye and the door opened. The Zealot sat there in a cell with his head low.

"Careful," the guard said, "He's a handful."

"I'll watch him," Brigid said, leaning against the wall outside the cell. "Still sore about being caught?" The zealot said nothing. "We both know what the Prophets have done to our people, what they did to the Sanghelli. How long do you think it will be before they replace the Sanghelli as they have every race before us? Three years, five? Ten, at the most? We both know that it isn't permanent, and soon the Sanghelli will be nothing but the loyal pupped of a race that enslaved us for their own purposes."

"You do not understand," the zealot said, he sounded much different than the raving warrior they had brought in, "I have shamed my family beyond recognition. I can never return home."

"Are you so sure of that?" Brigid asked, "I can never return either." She removed her helmet, her scarred face revealed to the zealot. "My family nearly disowned me when I joined the military, they have believed me dead for two years; but above all they valued beauty, which I no longer possess." A silence hung in the air. "Why do you believe so strongly in the Covenant, it has given you nothing?"

"My father was a Zealot General," the Sanghelli said, "He wanted me to follow in his footsteps. It is all I have ever known, now I can never see them again."

"Come with me," Brigid said. She waved her hand in front of the cell and it opened. The zealot looked up in surprise.

"This may seem an odd question," he said, "But, are you really opening my cell?"

"Come on," Brigid said, it wasn't a request. The zealot stood up.

"You must be either very powerful," he said cautiously, "Or very stupid."

"What?" Brigid asked.

"You just let a leader out of his cell," the zealot said.

"Killjoy will keep an eye on you," Brigid replied. Killjoy appeared next to the Covenant, cleaning her fake weapons. She smiled and gave a very evil glare, the zealot shrunk away. "She won't alert me unless you do anything stupid, I'd advise against that." Brigid smiled and led the Zealot into the archive, the guard gave her a look, but then saw her rank and quickly stood aside, bowing apologetically.

"You never told me your name," the Sanghelli said.

"As you have neither requested or given your own," Brigid replied quickly, "Do not mistake information for compassion. What I am about to show you will change your life forever, it is up to you whether the change is a good one." Brigid did not ask the Sanghelli his name, she just placed her hand on a station and Killjoy transferred to the pedestal from her normal, walking, form.

"Let me guess," Killjoy said, "Historical archives?" Brigid nodded.

"Accessing records 1-287," Killjoy said, "Identity confirmed, viewing now." Killjoy waved a hand to lower the viewing screen and start the hologram. Brigid watched the Sanghelli as their history was laid out, the victory and lies of the Prophets, the truth behind the grunt rebellion, everything. The Sanghelli placed his hand over his eyes and begged for the images to stop. Brigid let them go on for a few more seconds until there was no doubt that the Sanghelli understood what had truly happened to his people.

"Stop," Brigid commanded. Killjoy cut the feed. "We are not the heretics you think we are, we are those who are trying to save the universe from destruction should the Prophets ever find HALO. That is why they needed you to hate humans, an enemy is a good way to unite a nation. War is an even better way to work toward patriotism, sometimes this is a good thing and the war is just. Other times it is to hide an agenda that plots the destruction of millions of worlds. The prophets know of the power of HALO, and they seek it out so that all races may be purged of the universe. They plan to leave behind Prophet DNA, unalive it will survive the blast and later be awoken by

robotic sequences. So, you have two choices: you can die in the cell as a disgraced warrior, or you can take your place with us and fight to bring the truth to light, but you must prove yourself over several years. Something to remember, we kill traitors and all of their family." Brigid knew her words were harsh, she also knew that they were true and necessary measures to protect the Belegara. She turned and mentioned for the guard to escort the Sanghelli back to his cell. As the two guards grabbed his arms and began walking him back he paused and turned.

"My name is Kulase," he said.

"I'm Brigid," she replied. The two looked eyes for a moment and Brigid continued on to the briefing room. She entered to find the rest of her squad ready to go.

"News," Oren said, "Our missions been pushed up, our window just closed." Brigid switched to "soldier" mode and became a flurry of movement as she picked up weapons and information.

"What do we know?" Brigid asked, picking up one of the last shotguns and a beam rifle. She spun two plasma pistols and clicked them to her belt. Nã|la powered up a hologram.

"This is our way in," Nã|la said, mentioning to a back passageway. We'll be connected through radios and we shouldn't need to split up. We can have a map displayed on your hub so that we won't backtrack. It's pretty straight forward.

"Why am I going on this?" Brigid asked, "I don't even look like a Covenant."

"You'll be equipped with active camouflouge," Nã|la said, "You won't be seen. Covesash want you along for support, and if they have any prisoners we want them to."

"Ah," Brigid said. "Wait, the Covenant don't take Prisonersâ€|"

"They've started taking them," Oren said, "Covenant Prophets want to study your race and he doesn't think that they'll believe us if we try to rescue them."

"Point," Brigid said, "Lets go."

"Shall we?" Kidska asked. He led them all outside and powered up the Speak fighter. Kidska was one of the best pilots and could easily pass for a covenant-trained elite. "Hey," he said, "This new armor's nice. Fits much better than the old stuff." Brigid smiled, they stripped every Sanghelli they captured of their armor and gave it to their own troops for spies and special missions.

"How did I know you'd beg for the zealot armor?" Nã|la asked, annoyed with her own black armor, Nã|la only got away with being a warrior because of her abnormally large size and a simple voice-modifier, females were never allowed in the Covenant ranks.

"Hm," Oren said, "Let me think, could it be because he wants all the access a zealot gets?"

"Maybe," Kidska said, "It's fun to get to go everywhere." They entered slipstream and just hung out the entire time. Nã|la powered up a hologame that Brigid was just learning, it was like three-dimensional chess combined with checkers and stratego. The game, Ukola, was very, very hard to learn but still a large amount of fun when mastered. Brigid got whipped every time and it ended up in a close match between either of the siblings.

"Ah geeze," Brigid said after her third elimination, "I'm never going to beat you guys at this."

"You lasted longer this time," Oren said, turning his attention to his sister's board as Brigid's pieces disappeared. "You're getting better, Ukola takes a while to master."

"That's what you said last time," Brigid said, cleaning her beam rifle. "Kidska, what's out ETA?"

"Exiting slipstream," Kidska said, "You guys better wrap that up and come up here, we're docking in fifteen." Brigid stood and slung her rifle before climbing up the ramp.

"Woah," Brigid said, staring at a huge city floating in space surrounded by banshees, phantoms, scarabs, and other Covenant fleets. "We must be somewhere big."

"High Chairty," Kidska said, "It's the heart of the Covenant religion."

"Covesash is crazy," Brigid replied as the city loomed overhead.

"You better get that pack activated," Oren said, "We can't be seen with a human." Brigid turned the dial on her wrist and moved back into the shadows. Nã|la stood back with her arms crossed to look taller and wider than she was, Oren shrunk a little and slouched low on his knees to hide his stature of his sister.

"Hold your breath," Kidska said. A Covenant operator came over the radio and Brigid was lost. She had left Killjoy back on Revenge, she was far too valuable to even risk capture. Brigid listened to the different, but interesting, language and heard dull approval in the other voice. They docked and quickly disembarked. Brigid felt a little worried about brushing up against someone in such a bustle, they must have landed in the lower-class sector where security was easier to get by. Brigid traveled very carefully to avoid getting run over by the masses.

"Stay close," Nã|la said, not sounding a lot older than she was, "We don't want to lose you."

"You won't," Brigid said. Brigid nearly clung to Oren as they passed to avoid getting separated. She thanked the designer that the architecture left the roads in perpetual shadow. "This is the BACK way?"

"Yeah," Kidska replied, "The main roads don't have very many people, but they do have more security cams and guards, this way is much better." Brigid raised her eyebrows from under her helmet and continued on into a secured sector of the city. Kidska got them

through different area until they reached the security section, which was nearly deserted.

"Brigid, " Kidska said, "This is wrong, there weren't supposed to be guards."

"I think we have a snitch," Brigid replied, "Distract them, I'll sabotage the system." Brigid moved away silently and moved towards the great towers, a charge in her hand. She placed it carefully on the base of the tower and moved around the room. When she finished she moved back to Nã|la, only to bump a guard she had not seen and lose her balance. Brigid cursed herself as her armor flashed once, she froze. The guard stood up and called his buddy over, the rest of her squad came with them. Oren twitched his mandibles in their code and asked for orders. Brigid opened a channel to speak to Oren alone. "Keep cover, I'll be fine."

"What is it?" The guard asked.

"Something bumped me," the first one said. "Or something made me lose my balance."

"It was probably something," the second guard replied. The first guard crouched near the base of the tower, Brigid tapped out a series of clicks, telling her team to eliminate the guards.

"What?" The first guard asked himself, his hand on the charge. Brigid reached over and grabbed the guard, snapping his neck in one quick turn. He cried out and collapsed as Kidska put a sword through the other's chest.

"Let's get out of here," Brigid said. They turned to see that their way out was blocked by a wall and there was no door. In order to get out they would have to come out the way they came, "Something is very wrong."

"Here," Oren said, pulling them into a side door and back out to the street. They walked quickly, but did not rush. "Brigid's right, our information was bad."

"We can't waste time for the prisoners," Nã|la replied, "We have to leave, now." As they walked the charges went off and the security towers toppled. Around them chaos reigned as people fled the toppling towers and security guards began checking everyone in the area.

"We were supposed to be out of here," Kidska said, "It wasn't supposed to take this long."

"They'll lock down the city," Oren said, "We'll be captured!"

"Run," Brigid said. Thankfully the towers had caught fire and the city's guards were distracted. They got to the lower sections of the city before a guard took notice of them.

"Hey," the guard yelled, "Give me your identification."

"Move," Oren shouted. The guard yelled for his squad to open fire as they ducked through doors and around corners. Plasma scoring scoured the walls around them as they crouched. The unfailing barrage left only a small area uncovered.

"Roll through," Brigid yelled, shoving Nã|la through. She yelled as she fell and rolled through the fire, her shield absorbing two shots, but otherwise fine. Kidska and Orenn followed at the next moment, a small amount of plasma got through and he yelled as it reached its leg. Kidska and Nã|la were already moving forward and didn't hear Oren over the rifles. Brigid rolled through and saw plasma recoil off her shields, a few Sanghelli crept up and Brigid swung her pistols around, unloading them in turn to avoid overheating them. The fire drove the Sanghelli back and Brigid dropped the now wasted pistols. She ran over to Oren, who's leg was bleeding pretty badly.

"Go," Oren growled, shoving her arm away as she reached for him, "You can't carry me." Fire resumed and stopped as the Sanghelli drew closer.

"Grab onto me dammit!" Brigid yelled, grabbing Oren and helping him over her shoulder. Oren held onto her as Brigid took up a jog after her teammates. Brigid could hear the troops closing behind her and sped up, she could see the fighter. Brigid could also see the doors begin to close.

"Hurry!" Nã|la said. The ship hummed to life, but Brigid knew that they would never make it. The next thing she felt was a pair of hands close around her and rip Oren from her back.

"Go!" Brigid replied over her radio, "Come back for us, go now or you'll never make it." Nã|la did not respond, but the ramp began to open. "Kidska, take off. NOW!" The ship jumped to life and sped through the door just as it slowed. Oren was fighting the hands around him as best he could. Brigid smiled and unslung her beam rifle, unloading five shots into the closest five Sanghelli. Blood covered her armor as the beam dug through shield, steel, flush and bone to the soft material that kept the Sanghelli alive. She used her beam rifle up in a matter of minutes, keeping Oren close to her. A Sanghelli knocked him out with his plasma rifle; so Brigid reached over and, using her beam rifle as a club, knocked the Sanghelli in the face. Blood sprayed over as his mandibles were cracked off and the other two were dislocated. The Sanghelli fell to the ground faster than Brigid could drop the rifle and unsling her shotgun.

Brigid turned and put her foot on the other side of Oren so that he could not be dragged away or covered with the other bodies. She pumped the stock and opened it up on the nearest Sanghelli. He screeched as the metal tore into his face and blood seeped from the wound. Brigid spun and put the gun in the warrior's mouth, blowing his head off in one blow. She cocked the weapon again and kept unloading on the waves of troops. The gun clicked and Brigid brought it to the throat of a Sanghelli. He yelled as the stock broke bones in his neck and blood welled below the skin. Brigid threw away the weapon to grab up a plasma rifle only to find that the battery was dead, she flipped the gun around and rammed the guard into the belly of a Brute. Orange blood covered her hand as the creature vomited blood over the bodies of his comrades. Brigid threw his body to the side and dragged Oren to the side and propped him up against a wall. She then turned to see three Brutes coming closer, Brigid curled a bloody fist and prepared to ram it into the Brute in front of her. She did. The Brute took the blow, but did not notice Brigid stick the grenade to the grunt behind him. The Grunt squealed and ran back

towards the Covenant line, when the grenade exploded blue and orange blood covered the pavement and ran down the gutters.

One of the three Brutes fell with a Sanghelli helmet embedded in his back, blown there from one of the troops. Brigid used the blast to break the Brutes neck and jump onto the next one. Brigid slammed both her feet into the creatures chest and it fell to the ground with her. Brigid jumped on the fallen Brute and reached behind his head, stripping off his helmet. She brought the helmet from left to right on each side of the Brutes head and then slammed it into his throat. The Brute coughed as his throat was crushed and died a slow death. Brigid turned and saw a zealot with a sword at Oren's neck, terror in Oren's eyes. The bloody helmet was still clutched in Brigid's fist, she tensed as more Sanghelli approached.

"Drop it," the zealot said. Brigid looked once at Oren and dropped the helmet to the floor. Two Sanghelli grabbed her arms and one went to remove her helmet.

"Do you want those hands?" Brigid asked. The Sanghelli ignored her and reached for her helmet. Brigid snapped a leg up and hit the Sanghelli in the arm guard and smacking it away. He stared at her and backed slowly.

"Take this one to a cell," the Sanghelli said, mentioning to Oren, "Take that one to the interrrogation room." Brigid grit her teeth as they attached binders to her arms and threw a poll under them. She struggled as they dragged her away, but she could not get loose. She was thrown unceremoniously into a plain room with purple walls and a single light. Brigid took the moment to lock her suit shut and seal it against intrusion. The next moment a large Brute came and brought his hand across the side of her helmet, Brigid felt the blow as her shield absorbed the brunt of the hit. The Brute hit her again and kept on hitting her until a calm voice commanded him to stop. Brigid was nearly unconscience, the suits could protect her from the blows but they were not invincible, clear dents were beginning to show in the metal. Brigid stood as straight as she could, which looked pretty straight in the armor, and faced the shadow in front of her.

"Remove your helmet," the voice commanded.

"No," Brigid replied.

"We will pry it from your head," the Brute growled.

"Easy Tartarus," the voice said again. "I can control the actions of the Brutes, but what they are forced to do is up to you." Brigid eyed the Brute and lifted her hands to her head, unlocking the helmet and pulling it form her head. The owner of the voice came foreword in a hovering chair, a Prophet. "Strange," he said, "You do not seem as though you would pose much of a threat."

"Apperances are deciving," Brigid said, tucking her helmet under her arm and then shifted it around to her back so that it could attached to her suit. She put her hands in the small of her back and fingered the hidden blade attached to her armor. "Wouldn't you agree?"

"Yes," the Prophet said, hovering around her. Brigid turned with him, but back away as she did to keep the Brute in front of her. Brigid felt her back touch the wall and kept both shoulders on it. "Why do

you recoil?"

"You have not given me a reason to trust you," Brigid replied.

"I am surprised you are human," the Prophet replied, "Why do you fight with those who would destroy your race?" Brigid gave no reply, this was how the Prophets worked: they planted the seed of doubt into their prisoners and broke their minds, usually granting them access to almost all memories and information that the person possessed. Brigid knew what she had to do, she slowly began closing her mind to the voice of the Prophet as he dripped poison in her ear. Brigid felt her body relax as she stood there for an unknowable amount of time, just waiting for the Prophet to finish with her. She derw out of her stupor to see that the Prophet was still going and the Brute was becoming enraged at Brigid's silence.

"Answer him!" Tartarus yelled. He brought back his mallet to strike Brigid, but the years of training kicked in. As he swung the hammer toward her Brigid slipped on her helmet faster that the eye could register and brought her left arm up to protect her from the blow, which it did. The mallet stopped right at her arm and Brigid leaned slightly into it, both Tartarus and the Prophet gasped at, what they thought, the amazing display of strength. Brigid used the momentum to continue the arm of the hammer away from her and into the wall, where it dented the steel considerably. Brigid was glad for the helmet, her face was contorted in pain as she felt the stitches in her arm strain and the bone connector creak. Brigid lowered her arm and saw the Prophet swing his chair towards her. He smiled and fingered a small pad to his right, a red beam shot out from the chair and come close to her.

The next moment Brigid felt her shields die and the heat passed directly through her suit and protective black gel layer to her skin. The laser roamed over her skin and Brigid screamed in pain as the surgery on her body flamed alive just as it had been two years ago when she had the surgery. Brigid felt stitches expand and come back to the surface, and old wounds open anew. Brgid screamed and felt her body fall to the ground, smoke seeping through the gel layer of her suit and between the seams in her armor. Brigid heard the Prophet give Tartarus an order and two other Brutes came in the room, dragging her by the arms out of the room. She could remember nothing but her feet dragging against metal as she was dragged through High Charity and thrown, unceremoniously, into a cell, then Brigid remembered only blackness.

****Review Please****

****Aa'menealle nauva calen ar' malta. (May your ways be green and golden.)****

****Hannon le. (Thank you)****

****Vera****

5. Captivity? No Way!

****Hey ****

****I'm back.****

**Read on my fellow fansâ€¦**|**

**(I don't own HALO and I never will**)

**On with the ficâ€¦**|**

Brigid blinked her eyes and looked up, her suit's monitor was slightly fuzzy. Brigid slammed her head into the floor and it righted itself, the laser from the Prophet's chair must have fried a few systems. Brigid rolled over and sat up, her head felt like there were grunts on parade in her head banging frying pans together. Brigid looked around, her cell was dark and the only light came from the glow of the door, which showed a red light signaling that it was locked. Brigid stood up and heard something to her right, no matter how weak she was Brigid's training still kicked in. She spun and took up a fighting stance against whatever was thrown in the cell with her. A low growl filled the room and a cold seeped through Brigid to her bones, fear biting into her veins.

"Oh fuck," Brigid whispered, it was all the noise she could make. There was a hunter in the cell with her, and the only hunters who were thrown in prison were those who refused to fight, and they weren't fed very often. Brigid backed away as a green glow from the Hunter's cannon filled the room, her back hit the wall and she slid into a corner. One of her hands rested against the wall as the other came up in front of her, Brigid figured that her left hand was already mangled, if it could be lost again to save the rest of her body the hunk of metal was no great loss. The green glow came closer, but did not leave the cannon or grow in size.

"What are you little one?" The hunter asked. "I have never seen one of your kind before." Brigid lowered her arm a degree.

"I'm human," Brigid replied, lowering her arm further, trying to look at him.

"I have never seen a human like you," he replied, "Please, you have nothing to fear of me." Brigid lowered her arm fully, but switched on her head lamp, which lit up the room and the giant hunter before her. "Hm. That is much more practical." The hunter turned and powered down the cannon, lumbering over to the middle of the room. He turned and tilted his armored head to one side, looking at Brigid. Brigid brought her hands up and removed her helmet, flipping a switch so that her helmet light would stay on, she then balanced it in the middle of the room. "Ah, I can see now that you are human. It is strange armor you wear." Brigid was still a little to surprised to say anything. "Well, tell me your story, you must have done something to get thrown in this cell."

"I helped lead a raiding party for the Resistance," Brigid said, "Our intel was bad and we got trapped. I won't tell them anything."

"Ah," the hunter said, "They hope to break you with fear. Strange, they've only ever thrown two other humans in here, and both of them were released within the hour because of hysteria. It is strange that you do not fear me."

"I know your race to be rational," Brigid replied, "Several of your people are in the Resistance, though I cannot claim to know them

personally."

"Well little one," the hunter said, sitting back on his haunches, "I'm sure you have some story to tell of how you ended up with the Covenant Resistance." He groaned suddenly, sounding like a growl, and scraped at his shield arm with his cannon.

"Is something wrong?" Brigid asked, picking up her helmet and walking over to the hunter.

He sighed, "I have had something stuck in my arm for longer than I can remember, and I can't get my cannon off to pull it out. Truth never bothered to look after my medical condition when he threw me in here." Brigid set down her helmet and smiled. She took off most of her armor that had bulk, only leaving on her arm guards and the black suit beneath the suit. Brigid lifted the back section of her breatplate and located the pack just below the power cell, it housed first aid material and food.

"Let me see," Brigid said. She set up her lamp and slipped her helmet back on for a more focused ray of light. Brigid could see the piece of metal sticking out of the hunter's arm. She tapped it slightly and the hunter winced, blood began to well around the thing. "How long has this been in?"

"I don't know," he replied, "Too long." Brigid made a face beneath her helmet.

"This is going to hurt," she said, getting disinfectant ready and a bandage, "But it really needs to come out."

"Just do it," the hunter said. Brigid took a good hold of the metal and yanked it out of his arm, quickly dousing a cloth with medicine and laying it over the wound. Brigid's moves were faster than the eye as she wrapped a bandage around it and tied it tight. The hunter roared from the moment she pulled the metal and cringed away after she tied off the bandage. Brigid took out a small probe and poked it gently under the bandage, getting a small amount of blood.

"My suit has a toxin scanner implanted," Brigid explain, sliding the steel into a special slot at her arm, "I'm going to test your blood for any poisoning." Brigid looked at the scan from her HUD and smiled, removing her helmet. "Well, I don't know how, but it's a clean cut. You have a high level of bacteria because of the time it's been there, but the computer doesn't pick up anything to serious."

"Thank you," the hunter said, "I never told you. My name is Ja'naÃ§o, I was thrown in this prison when my brother was killed."

"You refused to fight without him?" Brigid asked. Ja'naÃ§o nodded. "I'm Brigid."

"If you do not mind my asking," Ja'naÃ§o said, "How did you come to aquire those scars on your face?"

"Long story," Brigid said, she removed her left arm guard and held up the mangled remains of her hand. From the elbow down she possessed only that scarred tissue of the joint, from there was a shrewed metal replacement that covered her arm. Stitches wound from the false thumb

around her arm, holding synthetic muscle to the metal bone and nerve cells. Brigid noted that wire was coming undone from her arm. Brigid's hand moved to her belt and she removed a special needle that would thread the wire.

"I don't think time is anything we have a shortage of," Ja'naÃ§o replied.

"It was during advanced infantry training," Brigid said, winding the wire threw her fake arm, and then through her own skin to attach it. "We were doing a live fire drill on the training course, my squad and I had just arrived on Ku-Lita, and another platoon was covering our flank. Well, one of them pulled a grenade pin, but was hit with a stunner and it rolled over to my squad. Juba couldn't get to me in time to pull me back, as I jumped over an embankment the grenade went off and sent schrapnel towards me. Blew off my left arm below the elbow, broke what was left of it, dislocated both arms, punctured my lungs, broke two ribs, shattered three more, destroyed my left eye, broke my jaw, my nose, my eyesocket, made me deaf in my left ear, tore two ligaments in my right leg, and broke my left leg in four places with extensive muscle damage. The doctors were able to save me, but they had to use revolutionary treatments and surgeries to salvage what was left of my body. The alterations made me stronger. Carbide ceramic ossification made what little was left of my bones unbreakable and replaced the ones that had been shattered. Muscular enhancement injects made the muscles in my body heal quickly and strengthen the others. Catalytic thyroid implants helped my muscle and skeletal tissues repair. Superconduction fibrification of neural dendrites increased my reflexes and helped adjusting with my new bio-electronic eye. Then there are countless others that helped me heal. Because of my pre-pubescent state the scars left are permanent and can never be removed. These scars are no badge of honor, they are a disgrace."

"It is not a disgrace," Ja'naÃ§o said. "It is simply another part of who you are." Brigid sighed and took out a soddering tool, melting the wire to steel with a double knot to make sure that it would hold this time. Ja'naÃ§o did not know her world, back home beauty was everything. Brigid then went into the emergency pack and took out some dried meat that was prepared for every trip.

"Dried Ketska?" Brigid offered. The hunter nodded enthusiastically and Brigid broke off two thirds of the meat, giving him the larger piece.

"I thank you," the hunter said.

"So," Brigid asked, "If you would care to tell me, how did you end up in this hole?"

"Hunters," Ja'naÃ§o explained, "Bond to their brothers, but that does not mean that we are related. Hunters can sometimes choose a different partner for battle. Luto and I had known each other since childhood, and I could not bear to face battle again. Truth ordered me to choose another partner, I refused. So, Truth had me thrown in here, I think he got more satisfaction than he let on." Brigid gave him a quizzical look. "Some races of the Covenant have kept their old ranking systems alive. By the old standards I would be the prime minister if of our people, Truth always viewed me as a threat because of my popularity among my race, second only to the royal

family.."

"Oh," Brigid said. "Let me check your bandage real quick, I want to make sure that it won't fester." Brigid stood and walked over to Ja'naÃ§o and put her lamp right over the wound.

"I thank you for this," Ja'naÃ§o said, "It was quite annoying after the first few months."

"It's not even infected. Do you know how long that in there?"

"I have lost count of the days," Ja'naÃ§o replied. "You told me the history of your injuries, but how on High Chairty (like the phrase 'how on earth') did you end up with the resistance?"

"Well," Brigid said, "A week after my surgery our planet was being destroyed and the Covenant were just pulling out. I ran from the infirmiry and found my squad, we jacked some supplies and a ship and blasted out of there as fast as we could. We made a blind jump through space and landed on the plant Ithil. Four days after that I met one of the solders in the resistance, my squad and I joined them after a few days and I've been fighting with them ever since."

"Why did you not just contact your human friends?" Ja'naÃ§o asked.

"We were to far out of our territory to hope for a rescue," Brigid explain, "And besides, we didn't want to get the order to destroy ourselves and our ship."

"They would have given that order?" Ja'naÃ§o asked, horrified.

"Yes," Brigid said, "We were driving a prototype ship and had vital information on it, we would have destroyed it ourselves had the need been so."

"Strange how trusting you are," Ja'naÃ§o said, "How do you know that I am not a Covenant spy sent in to interrogate you?" Brigid smiled.

"I doubt that," she replied, "Your thoughts do not seem to bend towards betrayal."

"You can read minds!" Ja'naÃ§o asked.

"No," Brigid replied, "Emotion and intent are my specialties. There is a strange component in the water on Ithil that increases brain function, apparently the effect on humans is that we can practice empathy on other creatures no matter what race they are from or what language they speak."

"Highly interesting," he replied.

"Yes," Brigid replied, "We still haven't been able to tell what exactly causes these abilities, but we know that it is in the water of Ithil." Ja'naÃ§o smiled and the two were fast friends. Days turned into weeks and still Brigid had no word if Oren was still alive or not, and her tack supplies had run out a few days ago.

"You should not pace so," Ja'naÃ§so said as Brigid paced the cell, "You will use up your energy."

"I have to do something," Brigid said, "We've been stuck here for weeks, and they could have killed Oren for all I know."

"I doubt it," Ja'naÃ§so replied, "If he's a high security prisoner then they will not execute him until he talks."

"Well," Brigid said, looking around, "I'm going to find a way out of here. Can't you just blast through the walls with that thing?"

"I've tried, they have an inhibitor on my cannon," the hunter said, "It's no use. Save your strength." Brigid ripped off her helmet with a yell and it bounced on the ground, illuminating the ceiling. She went to pick it up, but noticed a small crevice in the metal above her.

"What's that?" Brigid asked, pointing towards the ceiling.

"It must be from the spines on my back," Ja'na.Ã§so said. Brigid took a closer look and began to remove her armor. "I thought it would lead to a shaft, but I couldn't fit through."

"Can you stand right under the gap?" Brigid asked. Ja'naÃ§so stood under it and Brigid climbed up his back wearing nothing but her black suit.

"What are you doing?" Ja'naÃ§so asked.

"I think I can fit through here," Brigid said. Without another word Brigid climbed through the chasm and wriggled through and reached a ventilation shaft.

"Good luck little friend," Ja'naÃ§so said as Brigid's feet disappeared. "I'm glad you found your freedom." Ja'naÃ§so sighed and sat down. He had nearly resigned to a life of loneliness when the door opened. Brigid stood surrounded by the false light off the hallway.

"Hey." Brigid said, a Brute Shot in her hand, "Stand back." Brigid fired three shots and blew away the bars, she climbed in and showed the fact she wore a belt from the Brute Captain. "Here," she took a tool from her belt and took the small chip off his cannon, "That should remove the inhibitor." She quickly clipped her armor back on and picked up the Brute Shot. "Let's go."

"You came back," Ja'na'Ã§so said.

"What?" Brigid asked, "Did you think I'd leave you. Come on."

"You are a good friend," Ja'naÃ§so said, "Little Sister." Brigid suddenly felt a sharp pain in her head and grimaced. 'Relax,' Ja'naÃ§so's voice sounded in her head, 'It's just the binding force that holds those of our race together. It appears that you are supposed to be bonded to me as a sister.' The pain subsided.

'What the fuck?' Brigid asked herself, she could sense thousands of minds touching her own.

'They are seeing who you are,' Ja'naÃ§o replied, 'They will not question you, they just want to know who is being welcomed into the clan.' Brigid sighed as the voices quieted and she calmed.

"I downloaded a schematic of the city," Brigid said, "I think we can spring most of the prisoners."

"That would cause chaos," Ja'naÃ§o said.

"Chaos is good," Brigid said, "It'll give me time to find Oren and get any more who want to join me in fighting the Covenant."

"These are hunter cells," Ja'naÃ§o said, "They will listen to me if you set them free." Brigid jogged over to the control panel and flipped some switches, all the doors opened and the hunters traveled to the bars. Brigid flipped a few more switches and the bars slid open, except for one cell that would not open. "Blast it." Brigid set a switch and blasted the grate away, she kept her helmet on just in case they decided that humans were really despicable.

"Let's go," Brigid said, "The grunt cells are three over, we can let them out and then the Sanghelli. After that we can use back grav lifts to get to the shuttle bay and steal a few ships to get us out of here."

"And lead them straight to where?" A hunter asked, "Where can we go?"

"I have a jump system that will confuse them," Brigid said, "We'll be able to get away without being tracked. A cruiser will have a long-distance communication system."

"Are you suggesting that we steal a cruiser?" Another asked.

"We have a platoon of hunters," Brigid said, "And pretty soon we'll have grunt and Sanghelli support. We also have stealth and surprise on our side, I don't see what we should be worried about." Brigid grabbed more ammo. "Are there any human's imprisoned here?"

"Yes," Ja'naÃ§o answered, "I do not know if they are still alive, but they should be held near the grunts."

"Well," Brigid said, "In that case, let's free everyone we want and leave the rest to rot. This way." Brigid smiled behind her helmet and opened the outer door to see a Brute guard facing outward. Brigid thanked the designers for all the shadows, she could kill him silently without alerting any of the other guards. Brigid crouched and moved silently behind the great beast, clubbing it in the back of the head with the great blade of her gun. Brigid shoved his body over the side and it rolled down the bottomless pit beneath the prison cells. Brigid smiled and threw the brute that had been hiding behind her down the pit as well, but not before cutting his throat so he could not yell.

"You are certainly more powerful than you appear," the hunter who had doubted her said.

"Tell that to Truth," Brigid replied, moving on in her search for more cells, she saw a strange writing on the wall. "Can anyone read this?"

"These are cells for jackels," another hunter said, "Tell me we aren't saving them."

"We aren't," Brigid said, "Come on." She lead on through the bowels of the city until they found a row of cells for grunts. Brigid freed them and they began outfitting their band with weapons as they moved from level to level. Several Sanghelli had been freed, but they were a long way from getting everyone, and it was getting dangerous to move about without detection.

"I'm surprised they haven't sounded the alarm," one grunt said to his friend.

"A raiding party crashed the defensive grid," a Sanghelli said, "That's why they haven't sounded an alarm yet and the guards are placed on high alert. Not that it helps." A small chuckle sounded through the group, but Brigid silenced them quickly as a squad of jackels passed ahead of them. Brigid spotted a beam rifle and gave her Brute shot to a Sanghelli, taking the more refined weapon.

"Ja'naÃ§o," Brigid said, "Take the party on ahead and start making your way to the hanger bay. I'll free the rest of the Sanghelli, the humans, and try to find Oren."

"Stay safe little sister," Ja'naÃ§o said, thumping her on the back. Brigid nearly stumbled and laughed.

"It isn't me you should worry about," Brigid said, patting her rifle, "I doubt this will make it back to the hanger bay. Now get going before another patrol comes along." Ja'naÃ§o began running off with the platoon and a half of forces at his back. "And look after yourself." Ja'naÃ§o replied in her mind.

"Fear not little sister," he said, "I can handle whatever that bastard Truth sends my way." Brigid smiled and turned, her feet resting just before the edge of the precipice. She picked her target three levels above and fired twice, and then twice again. The two Brute guards fell before they heard the shots that killed them. Brigid smiled and took a gav. Lift up to that level. She removed a plasma rifle from the rack and held it at the ready, her other hand occupied by a deactivated plasma sword. She located some Sanghelli and quickly freed them, but Oren was not there. She led the new squad and freed some more grunts and three hunters, who believed her story the moment she contacted them through their bond. Brigid got to the last cell and found some humans.

"We should leave these creatures," a Sanghelli said, "They will slow us down."

"I'm not leaving behind my own people," Brigid protested. She opened up their cells, but no one came out. Brigid removed her helmet and a few Sanghelli gasped. "Oi, fall in!" Brigid invoked her voice that Sarge had taught her how to use, he said that in basic training every new marine was whipped into shape and could never refuse the tone of a drill sergeant. Sure enough, every marine, wounded or not, scrambled to attention. "Hey guys, I'm your rescue party. Everyone who can walk, grab a weapon and start moving. If you can't, grab a buddy and have him help you." Brigid smiled and replaced her helmet

as they began moving. She knew that they should leave, but she just wanted to check a few of the interrogation rooms, she hit her first lucky shot all day. "Oren!" Brigid blew open the door with a borrowed brute shot and shot the brutes in the faces.

"Brigid," Oren groaned. "Idiot, I told you to get out of here."

"WE are leaveing," Brigid said, "Grab onto me." Brigid threw Oren over her shoulder and stood straight. "Lets go." Brigid led the party through he city and Ja'naÃ§o guided her to the correct ship. They all got on without a hitch and began warming up the ship. Brigid removed her helmet and called a Captain over. "How well can you pilot this thing?"

"Pretty well," he said, "But we may have to fight our way out of here."

"I know," Brigid took control of the ships intercom system, "All hands, find a station and man it. If you can't find one head to the infirmary and strap in. All wounded to the infirmary, Oren that means you too."

"Awww," Oren said through their suit intercom, "You're no fun."

"Move," Brigid said, "We have to get out of here, get us clearence, I don't care how." Brigid turned and began working furiously to disconnect the ship from the Covenant network, she made it just as they got out of the city.

"Five ships in pursuit," a grunt said, "Two cruiser and three phantoms. Guns charging."

"Ion cannons," the Sanghelli said, "Fire on my command."

"Do not fire," Brigid said, "I do not want to kill needlessly. We'll make it away, just trust me." Brigid's fingers were a whirl against the keyboard, she had already removed the AI from the ship, she didn't trust it.

"They're within firing range," the attendant said.

"Ready slipspace engines," Brigid said, "Execute on my command." Brigid flipped a few switches and the alarm flashed through the ship. "Slippspace go in fiveâ€|fourâ€|threeâ€|twoâ€|oneâ€|mark." Brigid flicked the switch and the ship accelerated. Brigis switched stations and began programming for the second jump.

"They can track us," Ja'naÃ§o said.

"We won't be here for them to track," Brigid said, "Time for the greatest kept secret in the Covenant." Brigid flips a hidden panel and the switches beneath it. "These pods will be launched into space and confuse the perusing ships. Truth and the other Prophets hid them on every cruiser if they were on it." Brigid smiled. "Get ready for the next jump." Brigid keyed in the last few coordinates and hit the alarm again. "On my mark. 3â€|2â€|1â€|mark." Brigid set the ship into another jump just as the persuing ships appeared. Brigid smiled, they had jumped just at the same time as the pods. The Covenant now had seven ships to track and only five to send.

"I don't believe it," the captain said.

"Oh, just wait," Brigid said, "Five more jumps and we'll be there." Brigid keys in the next two more jumped. "Fire up the long-rang communicator. I need to send a patch to the resistance so that they don't blast us out of orbit."

"Can Iâ€|?" Oren asked over the intercom.

"Yes," Brigid replied, "You can come." Brigid and Oren traveled to the communication deck and it was powered up, the engineer left and Brigid plugged in the coordinates for Ithil. "Covesash, passcode Charlie-Delta-Two-One-Two-Echo, Colonel McClain." Brigid listened to the tones she heard that signaled her commander.

"Brigid?" Covesash asked, "My Lord, is that really you?" Brigid removed her helmet and smiled. "Is Oren safe?"

"I'm here," Oren said, stepping into the viewing screen, "Just a little plasma scoring and a dislocated mandible."

"We have new recruits fresh from the prisons of High Charity," Brigid said, "And updated plans of the city."

"Excellent," Covesash said, "We had nearly given up hope, you've been gone seven weeks. What is this about new recruits?"

"I befriended the Prime Minister of the Hunters," Brigid explained, "He has accepted me as his sister and we freed many others who wish to fight the Covenant."

"We will not be able to allow them all," Covesash said.

"The Hunters will be loyal," Brigid said, "We also have several humans who need to be returned safely into UNSC space."

"You bring much work, Brigid," Covesash said, "And much joy. I will see you upon your return." Brigid smiled and turned back to Oren.

"NÃ|la will be pleased at your safe return," she said to Oren, "Now, lets get you back to the medical bay." Brigid saw Oren put into Cryo-sleep and then returned to the bridge to execute the last three jumps that would take them home.

"We are ready when you are," Ja'naÃ§o said.

"I have been cleared to escort you to Ithil," Brigid said, "Those of you who want to can join us, those who don't will be permitted to leave, but you must leave now."

"Why should we join your battle?" One Sanghelli asked.

"You get to fight the Prophets," Brigid said.

"I'm in," he replied. There were a few of the grunts they had saved who returned home and they were given a blessing. Then Brigid keyed in the last three jumps.

"Ready on my mark," Brigid said, "Threeâ€|Twoâ€|Oneâ€|Mark." The ship accelerated quickly and the process repeated three more times. Brigid stood up as all the ship crowded to the windows. "Welcome to Ithil." They landed the cruiser and the engineers from the Belegra began stripping the ship of all former identification and information for further use.

"You hit a gold mine," the engineer said as Brigid helped move Oren from the medical bay, "This was one of Mercy's private shuttles."

"I want a triple scrub on this ship," Brigid ordered, "And double check for bugs and tracking equipment. I want a full de-briefing when your complete."

"Yes ma'am," the engineer said. Brigid continued moving.

"Oren!" A familiar voice called. Nã|la came flying out of a building and embraced her brother in the hover chair. "Oren, you're all right!" Brigid quickly left the two to their reunion, it was not her place to intrude. She did not notice Ja'naÃ§o following her until she reached Covesash's quarters, which were right next to her own, and the guards stopped him.

"Oh," Brigid said, "He's with me." Ja'naÃ§o looked at Brigid, unaware of her high rank. "Sorry, not used to having a partner." Brigid said, meekly as they were let through and into Covesash's chambers. Brigid turned to Ja'naÃ§o and quickly got him up to speed about what was going on. "You are about to meet Covesash, he is the leader of the Belegra and a very wise Sanghellli."

"Brigid," Covesash said as they entered the room, "Who have you brought?"

"Covesash," Brigid said, "This is myâ€|."

'Brother,' Ja'naÃ§o thought to her.

"â€|Brother," Brigid completed, "Ja'naÃ§o. He is the one who helped me escape from High Chairty."

"Welcome," Covesash said.

"It is an honor to be here," Ja'naÃ§o said with a bow. "I am afraid Brigid give me far to much credit, I onlyâ€|"

"Brigid!" Four voices shouted. The next thing Brigid knew was that she saw the ceiling and felt a great pressure on her chest. Ja'naÃ§o shouted in surprise, the guards burst in the door with weapons raised, and Covesash chuckled at the whole situation. Jo, Kyle, Brian, and Sarge were all piled on her chest and hugging her. It was just then that Brigid noticed the searing pain that they were causing because her armor was digging into her skin.

"Ow," Brigid said, "Guys air." They all stood up and Ja'naÃ§o remained wary. She stood only to be crushed again by her squad members.

"We'd thought we lost you," Jo said. Brigid finally got them all off her and stripped off her helmet. Covesash was still laughing as he waved the guards away.

"Brigid," he said, "I believe that one of our party is at a loss."

"Oh," Brigid said, "Ja'naÃ§o, these are my friends I fled Ku-Lida with. This is Jo, Kyle, Brian, and Sergeant Jonson." Each stepped forward and greeted Ja'naÃ§o. "Guys, this is my brother, Ja'naÃ§o."

"Say what!" Sarge asked.

"Um," Brigid said, scuffing her boot against the floor, "We were bonded together as partners while we fled High Charity."

"â€|" Jo said. "Cool!"

"Kyle," Brigid said, "Can you make sure that the humans are returned to UNSC with a briefing on our existence, or lack thereof as far as the humans are concerned."

"I'll take care of it," Kyle said, "The sooner the better, come on Brian, we'll need a squad."

"So," Covesash said, "Do you and your people wish to join our fight?"

Ja'naÃ§o remained silent for a moment and Brigid heard a whisper through the air. "I can vouch for myself and my people, we will fight with you, but they would like to meet you."

"Certainly," Covesash said. Brigid excused herself to go remove her armor and Ja'naÃ§o would remain to speak with him comrades. When she returned the sight was very funny. The other Hunters had taken a liking to Jo and were examining her quite closely.

"She is so small," one said, "How could she even fight?" Jo opened her mouth to answer, appearing indignant, but was bumped and nearly fell.

"She's so light," another said, "We should look after this one."

"I can see why you accepted the other human as your sister, Ja'naÃ§o," a hunter said to him, "Humans are small and there is a need in our blood to protect that which is weak."

"Hey!" Jo said in protest, only to beushed by Brigid with a finger to her lips.

"Jo," she whispered as the hunters continued talking, "Compared to them, we are weak. Now come on, I need some food." Brigid put her arm around Jo and they traveled to the kitchen. Jo was surprised at Brigid because she wasn't traumatized, then she remembered that Ja'naÃ§o had kept her sane and they were not traumatized by the capture. Jo put her arm around her friend and they went to go get some chow before settling back in.

****Review Please****

****Aa'menealle nauva calen ar' malta. (May your ways be green and golden.)****

****Hannon le. (Thank you)****

****Verya****

6. A Little Bit of Home

Hey guys, I'm back

****You can now precede to flee in terror****

****Sorry about my long absence, my best friend passed away and my grandfather entered the hospital, causing me to be out of town for a while. Thank you for being so patient.****

****Nywho, I STILL do not own HALO.****

****On with the ficâ€|****

Brigid opened her eyes and closed them quickly. If she didn't see the message alert flashing on her wall, it would not exist.

"Brigid," Ja'naÃ§o said from the next room. "You're awake, answer the message" She groaned and rose, muffling her short hair as she walked to the wall. Her hair had grown in the past few weeks, she liked the shorter hair cut more than her crew cut and was glad for the layer of warmth. She sighed and waved her hand over the scanner. "Lieutenant Colonel Brigid McClain, access code 185-A6-27." The screen flipped out and Covesash appeared on the screen.

"Good morning Colonel," he said.

"Sir," Brigid replied.

"I am sorry to have to wake you so early in the morning," Covesash said, "But an urgent mission has come up." Brigid nodded and information appeared as Covesash's face was reduced to half the screen. "One of our squads was captured by a platoon of human warriors on the Evena V system. We need you to sneak in with your squad and get them out of there."

"When do I leave?" Brigid asked. "The Revenge is being worked on."

"We have a smaller UNSC vassal that we found last month," Covesash said, "The crew has been brought to a stable enough condition that they can be transported. If you take the ship and its crew back to UNSC space I'm sure that you can convince the commanding officer to return our troops."

"Still," Brigid said, "It will appear more of a prisoner transfer than us returning their troops and getting ours back. When will they realize that we mean humans no harm?"

"Possibly never," Covesash said, "But I want you to lead them because if just our races go they will be mistaken for Covenant. The ship will be ready in 45 minutes."

"I will be on it," Brgid replied. The screen flipped back into the

wall and Brigid walked into the other room, a pillow in her hand. She threw it at her newly bonded brother and he gave a quiet roar in displeasure.

"The sun isn't up yet!" Ja'naÃ§so said, turning over and nudging her pillow back at her with his shield.

"It will be," Brigid said catching the projectile, "Come on, we have a mission. We leave in 45 minutes, come get ready and prepped while I get our squad together." She contacted three other Sanghelli and they were ready (if not entirely awake) and on the platform thirty minutes later.

"Don't we need to be briefed?" Kela asked with a yawn, her four mandibles stretching.

"They're trying something new," Lothk said, "They're going to brief us while we sleep."

"Subliminal messaging," Killjoy said over the speaker, "It's new, if it doesn't work there will still be time to brief you in the air so don't worry."

"You got me up to go back tot sleep?" Ja'naÃ§so asked.

"You can stay here," Brigid said, "I'll be perfectly fine on my own."

"Like hell," Ja'naÃ§so said, "I'm not letting you out of my sight little sister, you get in enough trouble already."

"You're talking like I sneak out of the house every day," Brigid said as she locked her weapons in place on the UNSC ship.

"Every other day," Ja'naÃ§so replied. Brigid cocked an eyebrow, Ja'naÃ§so was used enough to her helmet to read her expressions underneath. "What? Think I didn't know about you and Killjoy gallivanting off over the planet every night jut after dark?"

"Reconnaissance missions," Killjoy replied, "I can't very well just get up and walk on my own, and you'd only slow me down because I'd have to factor your presence out of the equations I was taking of the surrounding life forms."

"Oh so it would take you 0.6 seconds to process something rather than 0.48?"

"If you guys are going to talk do it silently," Brian said. Brigid had elected to bring another human in case they got separated. "I'm tired and I want to sleep." Brigid threw a de-activated hand grenade at him.

"Think fast," she said. Brian looked at his lap and then noticed the grenade.

"Egah!" He groaned and quickly threw the grenade outside, the adrenaline running through his veins more than enough to keep him awake. Killjoy let out a howl of laughter.

"Awake now?" Killjoy asked between laughs, Brigid let out a chuckle. Ja'naÃ§o just snored quietly in the corner, Brigid's antics were old news by now.

"I hate you until I wake up," Brian said. "Jesus, now I won't be able to sleep at all."

"We could always knock you out," Brigid replied.

"No thanks," Brian said, "I'll just go to sleep naturally." Brigid smiled inside her helmet and strapped into her seat, leaning back and closing her eyes.

"He's got a can of shaving cream with him," Killjoy alerted Brigid.

"Take control of the suit," Brigid said, "But not until he starts putting it on OK?" Killjoy waited until the last second before leaping into his suit and putting the shaving cream all over his own helmet.

"Ack!" Brian said, muffled greatly because she turned off his speaker, "Killjoy, get out of my suit!" Brigid chuckled and smiled as Brian found his armor locked down as the straps held him in place. Killjoy re-entered her suit still laughing and Brigid closed her eyes, already feeling the hum in her suit that meant it was being activated for use. She blacked out and remembered very little, about six seconds seemed to pass from when she closed her eyes to when they opened again. The others were already stirring awake and the five hour flight was over, Brigid stretched her muscles and noticed Killjoy was out of her suit, she looked around and it seemed as though something slammed into her brain.

Brigid groaned and sat back down, Brian was in a similar state. She gritted her teeth and set a hand against her helmet. Another second and she ripped the thing off to press at her face, hoping to relieve some of the pressure. Brian was already on the floor with the Sanghelli standing over him, concerned. People were shouting, but Brigid couldn't hear them. She just felt the extreme pressure on her head and, she didn't know it, let out a loud scream in unison with Brian. All of a sudden the pressure was gone and she was fine, Brian took a little longer to adjust, but they both stood. Killjoy had released the bond on his armor the moment he had felt pain. Brigid stood and she could remember every detail about the mission as if she had attended a three hour briefing on the matter. She waved Ja'naÃ§o away and clipped her helmet back on.

"What the hell was that?" Brigid asked as Brian sat, she cleaned off his helmet and handed it back to him. His hands were shaking and he needed help the clip it into place.

"A reaction," Killjoy replied, "I'm afraid that human minds take a lot longer to process the messages. We'll have to keep humans knocked out longer and tone down the messaging."

"It hurt like hell," Brian said, removing his helmet, "Ugh, that hurt." He stood and drank water from the side dispenser. "I'm gonna feel that for a while."

"How come I'm not feeling the side-effects?" Brigid asked.

"It's being processed by the left side of the brain," Killjoy elaborated, "Yours was altered in surgery." Brigid sighed, just another way she was different, even from a Sparten. "Don't worry," Killjoy said as she re-entered the armor, "We'll get all the bugs out of the system and then it will be painless."

"I'll stick to regular briefings," Brian said, "I think they're less painless and we certainly have enough time on this flight."

"Brian," Killjoy said, "This is to make sure that the mistakes that led to Brigid's imprisonment. If we can take raw data and transfer it directly to the brain then we can ferret out spies, if there are any, easier. We can also send updates directly to our spies in the Covenant. It could mean an overthrow of their government before next year. I don't mean to be passionate, but right now the Belegara are one battle away from either victory or destruction."

"Why do you think we're risking a team for seven people?" Brigid asked, "We are so close to both failure and success, this new form of briefing gives us visual images of the area we're going to so we can know when visual updates need to be made to our files."

"Though I am glad you were caught last mission," Ja'naÃ§o said. "If you hadn't I might have stayed there forever."

"Yeah," Brigid said, "Well, anyway. How long till we break atmosphere?"

"Two minutes," Killjoy said, "You took longer re-emerging from sleep than planned."

"Let's get prepped people," Brigid said, "Remember, Brian and I will handle the humans, do not fire upon them. Defend yourselves if necessary, but do not do any harm what isn't necessary. Strap in and get ready for a bumpy ride." The group returned to their seats and Brian checked on the human marines in the back.

"Pansies," Brian said as he returned, "Scared out of their wits and reduced to slumbering kids once their captured. They'll be fine once they get back to their platoon." He strapped in just before the ship began to tilt slightly downwards. Brigid felt the familiar sense of vertigo as the human ship fell through the air like a brick that was being thrown off a roof.

"Please Identify yourself," A voice sounded over the radio. Brigid did not reply.

"Scan for weapons and take evasive action," Brigid ordered Killjoy. Killjoy jumped from Brigid's helmet directly into the ship, the Belegara had given her the ability to willingly change systems with an upgrade last month, she loved ravaging unsuspecting AI's computer systems when they weren't looking and leavin before they noticed information was copied. She took over the autopilot and drove it down much faster than any human ever could, pulling up at the exact moment needed to slow down in enough time to stop the ship. They set down and Brigid ordered the Belegara out quickly, Killjoy had updated her mission info that the Belegara would send a shiip to pick them up far away from human settlements.

"We'll have to steal a tank," Brian said, "They usually don't keep prisoners pretty long."

"Or maybe we could talk to them," Brigid said, "Don't forget that Brian and I know English as well as your common tongue."

"I know," Ja'naÃ§o said, "But still, I don't want to be separated from you and I'm not sure that Brain could pass for one of them, he's quite tall and the armor looks almost like one of the Sanghelli."

"You're right," Brigid said, "I say we return their troops first and then get our own back." The ship autolanded and Brigid went back to go see the Marines.

"Colonel," Brian called from the door, "We have Pelicans on the inbound, we gotta get out of here."

"I'll be right there," Brigid said, "I just want to make sure that the Marines are all right." She slung her weapon and removed her helmet and black mask. She looked at the stirring Marines and made sure that their vitals were stable. One woke up and looked at her, she gave him a warm smile and walked over to him. "Marine," she addressed him with the curt voice of a hardened UNSC trainee she had been so many years ago.

"You're human," he said, "What's going on?"

"You're going home," Brigid said, "Not all of us are Covenant you know."

"Who are you?"

"I'm an Colonel."

"Ma'am, did you save us?" The amrine asked.

"Not initially," Brigid said, "One of my teams got you away from the Covenant, but yes I did give the order that you be returned to UNSC."

"Thank you," the Marine said, Brigid checked his wounds, he might not walk again, but he would certainly live.

"What's your name?" Brigid asked.

"Carias," he said, "Daniel Carias." Brigid's heart stopped. She knelt next to the Marine and checked the spelling on his nametag, if he was only 19 years old if he was a day.

"Carias?" Brigid asked, "Your brother is Michael Carias?"

"Yes," Daniel said, he opened his eyes and could really see Brigid now, closer to him. "How did you knowâ€|.?" Brigid?" He went to sit up. Daniel had known Brigid very well when she had been dating his older brother, they had become almost like siblings themselves before Brigid signed up. "They told us you were dead, you've been missing for two years! Where have you been?"

"Brigid!" Ja'naÃ§o said, walking in, "We need to leave the Pelican's

are right on top of us!" Daniel took one look at Ja'naÃ§o and started to yell in terror.

"Danny!" Brigid said, "It's all right, he's my friend."

"You're friends with a hunter?" Daniel asked.

"Little sister, do you know this human?" Ja'naÃ§o asked.

"Yes," Brigid said in the common language shared by the Covenant and Belegara, "I knew him on Earth. Tell everyone its ok, we can stay here. This will be easier than I expected. Bring everyone inside the ship."

"OK," Ja'naÃ§o said, "I'm gonna have to trust you on this aren't I?"

"Bet your ass on that," Killjoy said, "Brigid knows what she's doing, and they cannot deny that I am a UNSC AI."

"All right," Ja'naÃ§o said. "I'll go get everyone."

"Sorry about that," Brigid said, slipping back to English. "Where have I been? There's a resistance to the Covenant, I've been living with them. How's everyone back home?"

"We heard about Ku-Lida being destroyed," Dan said, "We all thought you were dead." Brian turned the lights back on, they had been sitting in a semi-darkness before. Brigid flinched slightly as her eyes adjusted and Dan saw the full damage to the left side of her face. "Brigid," he breathed. "What happened?"

"A grenade accident during advanced tactical training," Brigid said, "Screwed me up pretty good."

Dan sighed. "I think we both know what I'm thinking."

"That my family will never accept me," Brigid said, "And I'm doomed to a solitary life because I know Mike will never take me back, not when I look like this."

"Are you kidding me?" Dan asked. "You'll be a hero! The triumphant warrior returned from the dead, fighting the enemy despite old wounds, hailed throughout the galaxy!" Brigid held up a hand.

"I don't want that," Brigid said, "Please, don't remind me of that place."

"Don't you miss your home?"

"No," Brigid replied, "My home is with them now, the resistance. With my brother, Ja'naÃ§o, and everyone else who I've gotten to know so well over these two years." Brigid stood and turned away. "I'll never return to earth. Never."

"Never is a long time," Ja'naÃ§o said, setting his plasma cannon on her shoulder, "You should not burn off the bridge to your home planet."

"My family will never accept me with my face scarred as it is,"

Brigid said, raising her left hand. "They only accept beauty, not the mangled creature you see before you know."

"I don't know what the fuck you're talking about," Danny said, still weak but seeing someone he cared about gave him some strength, "But Mike has regretted breaking up with you from the day after he did so and vowed never to love again when we found out your planet was blown up." Brigid gave a half-smile and shook her head.

"I'm going to go get Brian," Ja'naÃ§o said, "He wants some revenge and you obviously need some sense knocked into your head." Brigid told him that it wasn't necessary, but Ja'naÃ§o wouldn't stand for the way she was talking about her home planet. "That does it, one day I will take you back to earth myself, and if any human has anything derogatory to say about you simply because of the scars you bear I'll have a firm chat with them when you have left the room. Is that understood?"

"Sure thing Ja'naÃ§o," Brigid said with a smile, "Now, where are those Pelicans?"

"They just landed," a Sanghelli said over the intercom, "Opening doors now. One platoon of marines with a Sergeant Jonson in front."

"Make sure they only get back here," Brigid said, "I don't want any of you getting your ass shot off by mistake." She turned to Ja'naÃ§o. "And you might want to get back a little, you know how humans react to a situation they don't know."

"Shoot first ask questions later," Ja'naÃ§o said, "Yes I know." He moved away from the Marines in the beds and stood in the shadow where it would be harder to see him without looking. The only good thing was that unless they threw a grenade his armor should be strong enough to stop anything they threw at him shot of a direct sniper shot to one of his exposed soft points on his neck or back. They waited.

"Get this door open Marine," someone barked, Brigid recognized the voice of a sergeant anywhere. "I mean now!" Brigid heard a weld going on the lock and went over to open it herself. She clicked a few switches into place and the door wooshed open, revealing twenty Marines and their sergeant behind the blast door.

"Took you long enough," Brigid said, the group stared in shock. Brigid looked back, she knew they didn't recognize her armor. "Yes, I know I look strange, but get a move on there are wounded back here." She turned around and heard a pistol click towards the back of her head. Faster than the eye could see she clipped her helmet to her belt and turned around, grabbing the gun that was inches from her head and the sergeant that went with it. "What is your malfunction sergeant?"

"Your armor looks like the Sparten's," he said, "I'm wondering who you bumped off to get it."

"It's mine," Brigid said, "But I'm no Sparten. Do that again and I won't be able to take responsibility for what happens to you."

"I don't think you'll be alive to do so," Jonson said, "Take her in

custody boys, she's coming back with us." Ja'naÃ§so decided to make his entrance behind them.

"I wouldn't," was all that he growled out at them, his cannon charging.

"Don't," Danny suddenly said, the marines turned to look at him. "All right, everyone put their guns down, we're all friends here." No one moved, several marines just looked from Ja'naÃ§so to Jonson to Danny. "Sergeant, this woman is my friend from earth and these are her companions, they saved us from the Covenant."

Jonson woke up another marine. "Is what he just said true?"

"Yes," the marine said groggily, "One minute we were captured, and the next similar creatures in different armor were carrying us out of their prison." He dozed off again and Jonson lowered his weapon, the other marines took suit and Ja'naÃ§so deactivated his cannon. Brigid walked over to him.

"You know you don't have to be so over-protective," she said in the common tongue.

"It's my brotherly right," Ja'naÃ§so protested, "And I think we'd better speak in English from now on because those guys are giving us creepy looks."

"Sorry," Brigid said, "I'm not used to speaking English very often anymore. Lets get back to your base and I can explain what I can there, but first I'd like my squad back that you guys captured last week."

"I don't know about any humans we captured," Jonson said.

"They're not human," a Sanghelli said, dropping down from the control room, "Relax, I'm with them." The marines lowered their weapons on command. "They're ours and most of them were in my platoon, I'd like to have them back. I believe the count were five Sanghelli and two grunts."

"We won't know our people until we get to their base," Brian said, coming last down the ladder, "Now lets get moving, I want to be back in time for dinner. NÃ|la's cooking."

"Nerts to that," Brigid said, "Come on, we'll load the wounded onto your ships and then get our own." Jonson wasn't so sure.

"I'm afraid I'll have to take you in," he said, "But I can't just let you walk in with all your weapons out like that. I don't even know if you're telling the truth." Brigid turned and faced him in full light. Jonson took a step back.

"You recognize what could have caused these scars," Brigid said, "If you look in your database you will find my name and those of my squad are listed among the other dead and a simple DNA test to tell you that I'm telling the truth."

"Colonel," One Sanghelli said, raising a marine up and checking the medical drip in his arm, "We should hurry, I patched them up but I don't know enough of human anatomy to do more than that."

"There's no time for caution," Brigid said, reminded of the delicate state in many of the Marines, "We have to hurry." Brigid picked up one of the marines on his stretcher and set in on her shoulder.

"Give that one over here Brigid," Janaco said, extending his arm for the stretcher to be attached to, "I can take two more." Brigid loaded her brother up with marines and then took on two herself. By time they had all the marines ready to be moved, which was far more efficient than any of the human forces could have, Jonson was stunned. He also noticed that because of their loads, none of the squad could reach for their weapons without sacrificing the Marine on their shoulders.

"Follow me," Jonson said. Brigid motioned to her squad and they followed the group onto the Pelicans to be airlifted to the base. As soon as they landed Brigid noticed her people's homeing beacons show up on her display. Nothing short of a tank could have stopped them after that. They left the Marines in the medical bay and moved on to the prison cells. Their people were split up, but in the same hallway

"Colonel!" One called out, standing at the bars. The female was beaten savagely and her arm was in a make-shift sling, Brigid recognized her old teammate at once.

"Sida," Brigid said. "How'd you get in with this lot?" There were several Sanghelli and two Jackals in the cell, and they hadn't taken to the traitor kindly.

"They just chunked me in here when they stopped the battle," Sida said, "Any chance you can get me out of here." Brigid turned to the guard.

"Open this cell," Brigid said.

"I'm sorry but I can't do that." The PFC said.

"Excuse me?" Brigid asked. "Son, I'm a Colonel. Now get his cell open or I'll open it myself." The PFC jumped at the rank and flipped a switch. The Covenant ran to sprint out when Ja'naÃŕso got in the way and threw them back into the cell. Brigid flipped her rifle around and fired once, killing the Jackel Ja'naÃŕso had missed. Sida walked out and their medic saw to her arm. "You're slipping Ja'naÃŕso."

"I wasn't ready," he protested, "Let's see who else they have." Brigid freed all of her people and discovered Brian talking with a captain, though arguing would more describe the conversation.

"I don't care what you say," Brian howled, "We are not AWOL! Your fucking fleet left us to rot!"

"You should have called in when you reached the next planet," the captain yelled back, "So as of right now you all are reported overdue and you have to go to a court martial." Brigid interjected before Brian could get them in any more trouble.

"Actually according to file we're all dead." Brigid looked at the Captain, "So if you want to hold a court martial for five dead

people, good luck finding an officer who will run it."

"Hell," the guy said, "I'll run it."

"You really think that you can take down a Colonel?" Brigid asked. "If my memory of UNSC protocol serves than you have to outrank the officer in question." The captain's jaw dropped. "So, know any Admirals?" The captain looked away and stared at his foot. "Don't beat yourself up about it, it'll sort itself out eventually." Brigid and Brian walked away and were later escorted into a room with Sergeant Jonson and a commanding officer. They were motioned to sit and offered refreshments. Ja'naÃ§o declined politely and his two companions followed suit, no longer used to human food. Brigid even recoiled as the coffee was brought in. The two officers turned to thank the lackey to thank him.

"I forgot how sharp our food smells," Brian said.

"Yeah," Brigid said, "It doesn't smell anything like the food at home."

"So," the officer said, "Your squad has been alive all of this time?" Brigid looked over the screen and clicked off Juba and other's who had not made it off Ku-Lida.

"Only these five," Brigid said. "At least those are the only one's under me."

"All right," the lieutenant without a nametag said. "And you have joined a Covenant branch?"

"No," Brigid said, "We are not fighting with the Covenant, we fight against them."

"I'm not sure I understand then," he said, "Are you telling me that there is an entirely separate force that we are not aware of?"

"Yes," Brian said. Brigid had tapped out a code with her fingers telling Brian to reveal as little as possible. As much as they wanted the human's to have knowledge of the Belegra, secrecy was the more important mission as far as the Covenant's knowledge of their presence was. There was a pause for several seconds until the lieutenant broke the silence again.

"Oh," he said, "Well, if you feel as though there are any details that I need to know feel free to voice them."

"We will," Brigid said. Another long pause.

"Perhaps you can tell me your relationship with Corporal Carias," the lieutenant.

"He's my ex-boyfriend's little brother," Brigid said simply.

"All right," he said. "Um, why did you not follow UNSC protocol and destroy the ship along with your AI's."

"Because I didn't want to die," Brian said.

"But you knew the protocol." The captain said.

"Yes," Brigid replied, "And if you did technically I can refuse this line of questioning due to my rank and also you have no name tag or unit insignia." The captain didn't say anything. "So, do you want to stick to protocol?" Brigid rose with Brian.

"Now, if you excuse me," she said, "We'll be leaving."

"I don't think so," the captain said.

"Ja'naÃ§o," Brigid said as a large man grabbed her from behind. The hunter broke through the outside door with an unearthly growl and aimed his cannon at the nearest marine.

"Unhand my sister!" He bellowed. They dropped both the officers to the ground and they landed, Brigid clipped on her helmet and joined her brother, slipping back into their language.

"Where is our ship?" Brigid asked.

"In low orbit two clicks away," Ja'naÃ§o replied.

"Tell our people to get out of here fast and make for the ship," Brigid ordered over their suit-to-suit intercom. "Get out and hurry up, stay low and steal a vehicle if you have to."

"Already have a Pelican hot-wired," Killjoy said, "And you are the only three not here."

"On our way," Brian said.

"I'll be faster if you're on me," Ja'naÃ§o said. "I can jump higher."

"Sure," Brigid said, "Just let me say goodbye to our friends." She slipped seamlessly back into English, "Now, we must be going, bye-bye!" She waved comically as they stared dumbly and grabbed the spike on her brother's back, swinging up next to Brian as the Hunter charged. A alarm sounded, but it was useless. Killjoy was in the system and wreaking havoc with their communications. It was then that Killjoy came face-to-face in an AI close to her power.

"Hello," Killjoy said as the female AI shut down the false alarm and activated the real one. "You're like me aren't you?"

"Pretty much," The woman said. She tried to get communications back online, but Killjoy wouldn't let her.

"I'm Killjoy," she said, "Please don't read me, that's very rude."

"You're the one destroying all the systems I worked so hard to build," the AI replied, "I'm Cortana. How come you're helping those fugitives escape?"

"They're not fugitives," Killjoy said. Deactivating another camera system so that her three friends could pass without being tracked. "Here's some data on how to distinguish the Resistance from the Covenant." Cortana looked over the facts and noticed the nuances

between their armor and other differences between the forces.

"I see," Cortana said, she ignored trying to get the systems back online and tried to hack Killjoy. "You're a UNSC AI!" Cortana exclaimed. Killjoy shrieked and threw Cortana out of her systems. "You were one of us?" Killjoy shrieked against and rammed her full force at Cortana, sending the un-modified AI reeling from the metaphysical blow. Killjoy sent the last few commands and jumped out of the system, returning into Brigid's suit.

"We gotta get out of here," Killjoy said, "Rapidly." Ja'naÃ§o pushed the pace and barreled through a platoon of marines to get into the hanger. A Sanghelli stuck their head out of a Pelican and waved.

"There!" Brain yelled. Ja'naÃ§o banked like an airplane and ran up the ramp. Everyone buckled in as the ship took off and flew low.

"Killjoy," Brigid said as they passed the doors, pilots were scrambling to fighters. "Can you risk the system one more time?"

"Sure," she said. Killjoy jumped into the system and closed the blast doors, then got out before Cortana could have her systems and re-entered the ship before transferring back to Brigid. "Done."

"Rock on," Brigid said. "Lets get back to the ship and go home."

Cortana turned as the ship roared away. She turned back to 117. "Pick me up." The large sparten raced down and slipped the chip into his helmet as Cortana re-entered his suit.

"What was it?" He asked.

" I don't know," Cortana said, "It was an AI more advanced then anything I've ever seen. She had the ability to jump from system to system at will. I've never seen anything like it."

"Is it a threat?" 117 asked.

"No, I don't think so," Cortana said. "Lets go home."

"We got all of them Covesash," Brigid reported, "All of our people are free. Though we might have a small breach of security."

"Specify," Covesash said.

"Killjoy came in contact with a powerful UNSC AI," Brigid said, "The AI Cortana learned that Killjoy was, and still is on some level, a UNSC AI. We do not foresee any imminent danger, but we do now know who Cortana may come in contact with and if our information can be viewed."

"Killjoy," Covesash addressed the AI projected on the floor.

"It was a violation," Killjoy said, "She was the most advanced AI

I've ever met. If I hadn't had the upgrades from your technicians she could have accessed all of my systems." Killjoy continued. "There's more, that AI wasn't in the system when I entered it. She came in later, like someone placed her there. I think it was a Sparten AI."

"You're telling me that a Sparten could know we exist?" Covesash said, they had heard of the legendary warriors and knew that they were stronger than Brigid, who had long since proven her speed and strength beyond those of her own race.

"Possibly," Brigid said, "But I'm not sure its that big of a concern. Spartens are few and far between, they are also the most likely to die in any military engagement because of the missions presented to them. They're handed the impossible on a daily basis and expected to survive."

"So just like what we do to you," Covesash said, "I think you underestimate their chances for survival."

"Spartens are different," Brigid said, "I just have this feeling that we can trust them."

"You're feelings are usually right Brigid," Covesash said, "If you think that we can trust them then we won't distrust them. Well done Brigid." Everyone was dismissed, but Brigid stayed a moment.

"It's all right Ja'naÃ§o," Brigid said, "You can listen, I just need a moment." Her large brother nodded and walked through the door, Covesash waited until they were gone before addressing the human again.

"What is wrong Brigid?" Covesash asked, his voice seemed tired and ragged now that they were alone.

"What did you mean?" Brigid asked. "Just what we do to you?"

"Brigid," Covesash said, "You're the best we've got, even better than NÃ|la. I'm not going too lie to you, the last missions we've sent you on have been ones we would not have even conceived three years ago." Brigid let her own importance hit her like a sledge hammer. "I've tried, for better or worse, to keep the news of your heroics out of mainstream knowledge, but you still have a cult following among many young females and your name has been honored in the naming of several newborns. We give you the impossible Brigid, and you're a hero, and fir that I don't know if I can ever forgive myself."

"Why?" Brigid asked.

"Because I use you more than any other agent," Covesash said, "I've trained myself to think of you as an object, a queen on the chess board, not a living thing. It's how I've had to think to keep this force alive, and I fear that now that you know I can never forgive myself as it will not be granted by you." The old Sangheili sat in his chair a put his head in his hand. "It seems as though my sins fall upon everyone else to bear them." Brigid unclipped her helmet and walked to her friend, setting her hand on his arm and kneeling next to him,

"Covesash," she said, "I have not done anything against my will or blindly. Every mission I have known what I am going into and my chances for survival." Covesash was crying, Brigid grit her teeth. "What happened to Nã|la and Oren was not your fault. The blame lies with those who branded them, not with you." Brigid could see that it wasn't comforting. "Covesash, doing the right thing is never easy, and the innocent are always the ones to pay. But, before you beat yourself up as yourself, would their lives have been better if you had remained silent and let them live in the Covenant? Nã|la would have been married off long ago, and Oren forced into labor or the army, dead on a distant battlefield fighting for the right to destroy the universe. Your children love you for getting them out of there, and nothing will ever change that."

Brigid clipped her helmet back on and joined Ja'naÃ§o outside the door. Covesash was left alone as his children drew close, know that their love would never be doubted for any reason. Covesash's words had made much more of an impression on Brigid. Ja'naÃ§o comforted her through the night, but the fact that he thought no differently of her than UNSC did was not comforting. She realized that her commanders could not care about her, if they did then they would not push her to accomplish all that she could and save their cause. She did not sleep well that night, dreaming of the past and looking for someone who cared about her before the accident. She could only think of the Carias family, and Michael who had loved her dearly, though not dearly enough to sacrifice time for her. She cried that night, silently so as not to wake Ja'naÃ§o, and woke to erase the memories from Covesash's words. Ja'naÃ§o had asked her why she had done so, and she knew that if she had that knowledge in the back of her mind that she would hesitate and probably die. She sighed as the memory wipe was complete, curious as to why she had been so depressed that morning.

More is coming soon, I promise.

So, please Review. I like all feedback, good or bad.

I thrive on reviews and they make me want to write more.

Tenna' ento lye omenta

(Until we next meet)

Vera

7. A Bittersweet Time

Hey guys, I'm back

You can now precede to flee in terror

Sorry about my long absence. There has been a lot going on in my family and in my life and I have been called back home several times this year. But I'm back now, and I should be able to write more often, thank you for your patience.

**Author's note: A few people have said that this story moves quickly. I would like to state that there are a least a period of

several weeks between chapters if not years.**

Nywho, I STILL do not own HALO.

**On with the fic! **

Kulase lurked quietly in the bushes of the planet as they lurked closer to the Covenant camp. He was nervous, this was his first mission against his former kindred in a command position. True, he was under Brigid, but he was still in charge of his squad. He motioned silence as he looked for Brigid's signal. They were going to capture a Prophet. The plan was bold and dangerous, but Kulase trusted Brigid and had sworn himself to her long ago. He smiled, she had accepted his oath to her in honor of the Resistance, but he had not sworn himself to the Resistance, he had sworn himself to her. The speech Ja'na'ño had given him still rang in his mind. Ja'na'ño had threatened Kulase with death if his oath was broken and Brigid was harmed as a result. He straightened his smile and looked closer across the clearing where Brigid was waiting with the signal.

Brigid raised her helmet from her knee and clipped it on. Killjoy waited for the go and then entered the Covenant systems. Killjoy waited for a moment and then destroyed the systems for the group in a moment, killing all electronically systems. She barely managed the jump from the ship back to Brigid before the systems died.

"You're in," Killjoy said. Brigid did not wait or the Covenant's eyes to fully adjust to the dark. As soon as she knew they were not panicking she fired the flare. The sudden light blinded the Covenant and Brigid's forces charged. Suddenly the ship opened and Covenant forces poured out of the opening. They were charging directly into a trap.

"Ja'na'ño!" Brigid shouted as the forces collided in a bloody mass. "It's a trap, call everyone back!" A few of her forces ran back into the woods as Ja'na'ño climbed onto a pod.

"Retreat!" He bellowed. "Fall back to the woods!"

"It's a trap," Kyle said, gathering up his squad quickly and leading an ordered retreat. Brigid was the last to leave as Ja'na'ño wriggled into the brush. She could see the woods and pushed her body to the limit.

Truth stared after the figure in wonder, he could barely see the slight frame as the human ran by.

"Bring me that human," he growled. A jackal barked in reply and took up his rifle. He aimed and shot three times.

Brigid felt her shield give way on her leg and changed her course. The second shot took out her armor and Brigid felt a small sting in the back of her leg. The third shot came faster than she expected. She felt a pain in her right leg and fell to the ground as she stumbled.

"Brigid!" Ja'na'ño yelled, trying to go after her as ten Sanghelli held him back.

"Go!" Brigid said, knowing that forces were coming behind her. She

pushed herself to her feet and started running again. She turned and shot three of the Covenant in the face. She turned to see Ja'na'ño fire his cannon, but he barely made a dent in their forces. Brigid knew that she could never make the cover of the forest in time, they were gaining on her. "Take Ja'na'ño and go, get out of here!" She was hit again and groaned as the shot hit her left leg, sending a shock up the nerves that had been damaged. Blackness clouded her vision for a moment before she rolled on her back and began firing, determined not to be taken alive. She could feel Ja'na'ño being dragged away. Suddenly two strong arms hauled her to her feet and picked her up. Brigid flipped on her rear projectors and saw Kulase behind her. "Get the hell out of here!" Brigid yelled as Kulase began to drag her towards the woods.

"Colonel," Kulase said, "With all due respect, no!" Kulase got them to the trees, but the Covenant were only about three meters behind. Kulase threw Brigid over his shoulder and took off running. Brigid reached around and clicked off her helmet light, Sanghelli had extremely good night vision. She also clicked on her distress beacon, which would alert their ship of where they were.

"Killjoy?" Brigid asked. "Can you feel that ship's signal?"

"Yes," Killjoy replied.

"Go," Brigid said, "You know you can't be captured, now go." Killjoy jumped out of the suit and, thankfully, had a ghost tracer on Brigid so that she would know her location even if the beacon was destroyed.

Kulase ran into the jungle and tore down a hill, hoping to lose the Covenant in the darkness. He paused and knew that as long as he ran they would follow him. He kept on running, looking for a place where the foliage would be dense enough to hide in. He ran another two kilometers and paused, panting for breath, setting Brigid down near a tree.

"Kulase," she said, "Give me your weapon." Kulase handed over his rifle. She took it and raised her own. They were both down fifty percent, but that should hold her long enough. "Ok, go back to the ship and tell them to take off."

"What?" Kulase asked.

"Leave me here and go back to the ship," Brigid said, "That's an order."

"I'm sorry," Kulase said, "But that isn't an order I can obey" The Covenant rounded the hill. "Sorry about this." Kulase made his decision. He grabbed his rifle and hit Brigid over the head, knocking her out. He quickly laid her in the brush and covered her with boughs so that she wouldn't be seen, then he activated her camouflage just to be safe. He waited until the Covenant were close and took off running as they charged after him.

Brigid opened her eyes and looked up at a white ceiling. She sat up and saw her subordinates talking in a corner, she did not see Kulase.

"What's going on?" Brigid asked.

"You're back on the Revenge," Kyle said, "We found you unconscious on the forest floor." Brigid looked down at her legs and saw that they were bandaged. She flexed her feet and stood up.

"Brigid," Ja'naÃ§o said, "I don't think that you should be walking just yet."

"Where's Kulase?" Brigid asked.

"That's what we were debating," Kyle said, "We think he returned to the Covenant."

"But then why leave me?" Brigid said.

"It could make him look innocent," Ja'naÃ§o said, "If we break him out then he could be telling them everything."

"I don't think so," Oren said, "You would have been too much of a prize, besides why wouldn't he have just kept you with him and let you be captured with him." The bickering continued and Brigid just sighed, she clipped her leg guards back on and clicked her helmet onto her back. She walked away and into the armory, picking up several weapons and lashing a few together. It was Ja'naÃ§o to first notice her absence and seek her out.

"What are you doing?" Ja'naÃ§o asked.

"I'm going after him," Brigid said. "If he's a traitor I'll kill him and if he isn't I'll get him back." She shouldered her weapons and went to a one-man fighter through smaller access hatches to loose Ja'naÃ§o.

"Brigid," he said over the radio, trying to find her. "I found the tracking unit from your suit, I'm looking for the missing pieces." Brigid just smiled and powered up the ship. "Brigid, don't leave me." Brigid heard him order all fighters to be withheld exit authority. Brigid smiled.

"You honestly think you can control me in my own ship?" Brigid asked as the doors of the ship began to close. She picked a few keys and overrode one system, but the doors kept closing.

"Sorry Brigid," Killjoy said, "I agree with Ja'naÃ§o on this one." Brigid rolled her eyes.

"You can't stop mechanics," Brigid said, powering up her ship without the computer. She sped out as the doors slammed shut and could hear Ja'naÃ§o's curses as she sped after some phantoms. She followed them back to the zone where the Prophet's ship was and landed it a kilometer away from their clearing. She straddled her mini-warthog and revved it up. Brigid looked off toward the ship and spun out in that direction, carefully avoiding patrols as they came up on her radar. She stopped before the tree-line broke into the clearing and zoomed in on the covenant ship, that was preparing to take off. Brigid sighed and shut off her vehicle, shouldering all of her weapons.

"Fastest way in?" she asked herself, fingering the RPG latched to the four-wheeler. She shook her head to herself and brought her sniper

rifle to the ready, the ship was venerable at the stern. She quickly took out the guards and covered the distance between her and the ship. After activating an outer hatch she wished she had Killjoy to shut down the alarm. All that she could do was re-route the wiring to send the guards to the other end of the ship. She crouched and waited for jackals to pass before entering the bridge. She knocked out two ultra guards and hacked the computer. She took a chip out of her suit and cleared out their computer of all information. Brigid smiled and unlocked all of the prison cells, if Kulase was in one he would know to stay put. Brigid saw the prison sector break into chaos and she let them out in controlled groups towards the guards. Just as all the prisoners had escaped Brigid took out the full security system and entered the bay, but Kulase was not there. The alarm was blaring now, but she didn't see anyone.

"Shit," Brigid said. She walked over to the wall and looked at schematic of the ship. She located the interrogation rooms and quickly ran to them, on the way she went past the information center. She looked around and clicked a disk in, clearing off the system of all information. Brigid waited as the computer burned the disk, she heard voices behind her and crouched next to the computer and heard a door open behind her. She activated her camo pack and slid under the desk, hidden by the shadows and still able to reach the disk port. Truth hovered in on his chair, talking to a brute general, Brigid recognized the chieftain Tartarus.

"He is not showing any signs of breaking sir," Tartarus reported, "For one who was so faithful he seems to have truly joined the Resistance."

"A pity," Truth said, "He could have been our greatest asset. My spy tells us that he was close to their human leader." Brigid found this news bittersweet, Kulase was truly on their side, but there was a spy in their ranks. She made a mental note to go through everyone who had been brought in and to initiate a large-scale investigation through their ranks.

"A human is leading the Belegra?" Brigid froze again, checking the display to see that her disk was almost done burning. She grit her teeth, if she had the luxury of showing any emotion she was scared shitless. This was also wasting valuable time when she could be getting Kulase out of here.

"No," Truth said, Brigid felt a shiver run down her spine, whoever their spy was they were deep in the ranks, close to Covesash. "She is merely high up in their command. Our spy is close to the commanders human companion. They only call her little one, and they are true, the Resistance have no idea that instead of flooding their ranks we just sent in one very good spy team." Brigid hung her head, two hunters close to Jo were the spies. "Soon we will know the exact location of their planet and we can destroy them easily." The computer beeped that the disk was done. Brigid jumped, she had forgotten to keep her eyes on the computer. Faster than either of the other in the room could see she snatched the disk from the slot and crammed it into the back of her helmet, her rifle at the ready a moment later.

"What?" Tartarus asked, looking at the port. "There is nothing inside."

"Must be a glitch," Truth said, "Come, we have wasted enough time here, we must secure the information from the traitor Sanghelli."

"Excellent," Tartarus replied, picking up his hammer. Brigid stayed close on their tail all the way down and waited until they were three hallways away from the interrogations rooms. She jumped up and over the two, landing in front of them as her shield shimmered, the two caught a sight of her and started in surprise. Brigid turned and shut down the airlock door between the two hallways and sealed it with her plasma sword.

"Bitches," she said, slinging her rifle unto her belt. Brigid drew her pistol and held it at the ready as she checked the first interrogation room. The bloody mass lying crumpled on the floor could hardly be recognized as her friend. "Kulase!" Brigid ran over and rolled him unto his back. He was alive, but unconscious. Three of his mandibles were broken or dislocated and the fourth had been ripped off. She sighed as she let a gloved hand rest on his cheek. "I'm sorry." She reached back to get her first aid kit when a clicking was heard behind her. She whirled, rifle at the ready, and came face-to-face with the largest Sanghelli she had ever seen. Brigid slowly looked up from the creature's black chest plate and met a cold pair of golden eyes.

"A human," the thing said in its native tongue, "How low my brother has sunk that he needs to be rescused by such a pitiful creature."

"At least he has not consorted with those who would destroy him," Brigid replied in their language. "Stand aside, and you shall keep your life." The Sanghelli laughed.

"A human threatens me," he said, "And a wounded one at that!" Brigid looked down and noticed that blood was seeping through her armor, she had not noticed her wounds open. "I have killed thousands of humans, stronger than you."

"I beg you not to underestimate me," Brigid said, her hand slipped down and grasping her plasma sword. "I have no wish to kill a Sanghelli, but if you face me I will have no choice."

"I have had enough of this insult," the sanghelli said, lunging for her. Brigid let out a war cry and activated her sword, swinging for the gap in his armor at his waist. She felt the sword bite into flesh and pressed on, cutting him cleanly in half. The top half tumbled foreword and his legs crumpled to the floor. He laughed and set his hands on the floor, trying to push himself up. Brigid deactivated her sword and turned back to Kulase, the sanghelli would be dead soon enough. He pushed foreword and landed on his severed middle, screaming in pain.

"My legs," he cried, a ooze of blood seeping form his cauterized middle as he tumbled onto is back, writhing in pain. "My legs, you have taken my legs." Brigid re-set Kulase's mandibles and bandaged them before moving on to the rest, she winced as each gruesome wound revealed itself, he had lost a lot of blood. "How?!" Brigid ignored the incoherent screaming for as long as she could, when he began to sob she picked up her pistol and shot him in the back of the head to kill him painlessly. She sighed and turned back to Kulase, his camo

pack was damaged beyond repair, making her escape more difficult. She accessed the disk which she had taken from the ship and looked for weak points in the outer armor that she could blast through. She found none and suddenly noticed the pounding on the door as Tartarus tried to break through.

Brigid did not waste another moment, she hauled Kulase into a ventilation shaft and exited the ship. She covered the distance to the tree line and lashed him to the back of the four-wheeler. Spinning out of her position she hauled her wounded friend back to the fighter and took off, making all haste for the Crimson Revenge. She set the autopilot and walked back to the spare room where Kulase was hooked up to an IV. She checked his vitals and his bandages, they did not look good. She flipped a few switches, pulled off her helmet, and put her headset on.

"Mayday, mayday," Brigid said, "This is fighter 1138 transmitting emergency frequency 7, prepare for arrival, we have severely wounded on board. Requesting medical team in the hanger bay."

"Acknowledged fighter 1138," a voice sounded over the radio, "Medical team will be waiting." Brigid turned off the radio and noticed Kulase begin to stir. "Stay still," she said, as Kulase jerked awake. "You're all right, we're on our way home."

"They tried to make me talk," Kulase said, "Questions aboutâ€¦..youâ€¦..where you came fromâ€¦.." His breathing was ragged, Brigid looked at his ribs and noticed that they were beginning to bruise. She made a small slit and set two of them back, Kulase groaned. "I didn'tâ€¦.."

"Shh," Brigid said, "I know." She sponged his brow and continued to administer as much first aid as she could. She looked at his broken limbs and started checking for broken arteries. "They were frustrated with you, complaining that they couldn't break you." Kulase laughed, weakly.

"It's ironic," he said with a chuckle, "They're the onesâ€¦|â€¦|whoâ€¦|.trained me." Brigid smiled.

"Bet they're cursing that fact right now," Brigid said, "Stay quiet, we're home soon."

"No," Kulase said, "This is whereâ€¦|..my missionâ€¦|.endsâ€¦|." He took Brigid's hand in his own mangled limb. "Brigid," this caused her to freeze, he had never called her by her true name. "I just want youâ€¦|..to knowâ€¦|..it's been a honorâ€¦|..to fightâ€¦|.with you." She looked into his eyes and found her own tearing as a strange calm moved over him, infiltrating his eyes in the knowledge that he was dying. "I never vowed to serveâ€¦|â€¦|your armyâ€¦|..I only vowed to serveâ€¦|..you." Brigid set his head on her shoulder as he tried to raise himself to a sitting position. He looked up at her, and cracked a small smile, grimacing as the dried blood on his mandibles cracked and began bleeding again, he slipped into his native tongue. "Know thatâ€¦|.I have alwaysâ€¦|.and onlyâ€¦|."

Brigid held him, her eyes closed, then noticed that he was no longer breathing. She gasped and looked at him, something deep inside her breaking.

"Only what?!" Brigid asked. She lowered him onto the table with a concealed sob. She grasped his shoulders and shook him slightly, "Only what?!" She began to cry as signs of animation disappeared from Kulase's body. The blue blood had stopped seeping from his many gaping wounds and his skin had darkened considerably. Brigid set her head on her good friend's chest and sobbed. They had gotten to know each other well over the time he had been with them, he had been closer to her than maybe even Ja'naÃ§o. The two had taken to exploring Ithil together and mapping out terrain near mountains where they could hike all day. She cried until there were no tears left and her ship pulled into the bay. She raised her head at that time and disconnected all of the equipment, moving in a haze as she placed a cloth over Kulase's form.

Brigid clipped her helmet back on, steeling herself and hiding her heart away. Vowing once again to avenge yet another lost friend. She put Kulase on a stretcher and then decided to carry him out herself. She took her friend in her arms and made sure that the cloth over his body was securely in place. She lowered the ramp with a eartless voice command and it lowered in front of her. The medical team, Ja'naÃ§o, and her squad were all waiting. Brigid did not remove her helmet, she remained faceless and heartless as she walked painfully down the ramp. Everyone took one look at the body in her arms and hung their heads. Ja'naÃ§o looked at his sister and recognized that something in Brigid had died.

"Here," one person on the said, "I will see to him. You must look after your legs." Brigid said nothing, but laid Kulase on the bed and walked off to her own courters, Ja'naÃ§o followed her, but was shut off when she closed and locked the doors to her room. He overrode the system to find his sister facing away from him, working on patching up her leg with her helmet still attached, still silent and unwilling to break.

"Brigid," he said, entering the room.

"Let me be," she choked out, her voice was husky.

"You cannot mourn alonâ€¦." Ja'naÃ§o started.

"No," Brigid said, her voice breaking, "I just need to be alone now. Pleaseâ€¦..please just let me be." Ja'naÃ§o nodded and felt his chest tighten as he picked up emotions from his sister.

"You know where to find me," Ja'naÃ§o said, exiting the room. Brigid choked out a sob as she sponged disinfectant on her wounds. Wiping them clean and letting the tears run down her face. She placed a gel around the wounds and the gel expanded, sealing the wound and cooling it pleasantly, but the pain in her left leg was coming close to unbearable.

"I promise you Kulase," Brigid said as she unclipped her helmet, "I will discover the meaning of your last words, and I will fight the Covenant until the life ebbs from my heart." Her tears fell into her open wounds, burning the open flesh as the gel sealed shut, leaving her with a cold burning that reached to her heart.

Two days later Brigid served as pallbearer next to those who had entered the Resistance with Kulase. The entire settlement turned up, it was rare that a body was ever returned to be buried in rights.

Kulase had been given full honors and been awarded the Medal of Freedom, it was pendant fashioned after the HALO, their highest honor, signifying that his actions would never end but would keep effecting those around him forever.

Brigid and all others had put aside their armor and wore black heavy robes in honor of their friend. They lowered Kulase's body into the vault and it was sealed, tears began flowing freely, and silently, down her cheeks. She was heavily veiled and stood by his grave for many hours, Jo and Ja'naÃ§o feared that she would give out, she hadn't eaten since the day Kulase had been captured. She spoke to none while she stood by his grave, and no one could move her from that spot.

"We may just have to pick her up and drag her," Ja'naÃ§o said.

"No," Jo said, "She needs to sort this out for herself." Jo watched on as Brigid stood a silent pillar over Kulase's grave. Brigid stood there long into the night and did not move until the sun rose the next day.

Golden light broke over the mountains and illuminated Brigid in shimmering light. It did not penetrate the veil, but at the same time her features were visible. She raised her head and the next anyone saw of her she was standing in the same place with her armor on, helmet clipped securely onto her shoulders. She then turned and walked away, not even those closet to her could read any emotion emanating from her. She walked into Covesash's room and set the data dish she had gotten from Truth's ship on the pedestal, downloading it into the Resistance systems instantly.

"This is all the Covenant intelligence I was able to gather," Brigid said. "You should be able to analyze it and find a weak-point. Also, there are a pair of Hunter spies close to Jo, we need to see that they get false intel from now on. I'll have you t heir names at the end of the day."

"Brigid," Covesash asked, "How are you coping?" Brigid remined silent despite the question. "Brigid?"

"Our relationship is professional," Brigid said, "If my emotions are effecting my work you may speak to me about them."

Covesash sighed. "UNSC has contacted us, they would like you and your squad to return to a UNSC system to finish off matters between you and the UNSC."

"When do we leave?" Brigid asked.

"Twenty Minutes," Covesash said, "TI wasn't my choice, but they'll be sending a ship to these coordinates." Brigid took the disk and nodded.

"Thank you," she saluted him and turned, "I'll have a full report by time I get back, chances are they'll want Firefly back."

"Should I come then?" Firefly asked, appearing. Brigid set her hand on the panel as Covesash nodded.

"We'll miss you Firefly," Covsash. The AI took control of the suit

and waved at Covesash, who chuckled and waved back. Brigid went to a smaller ship, not the Crimson Revenge because it was one of their most secret weapons. She walked up the ramp to Opal Illusion, Jo's own private cruiser, and saw the platoon of Hunters waiting in the bay. She picked out those who were unfaithful in a moment, she made a note and later logged onto the computer, sending a message to Covesash to monitor the two hunters at all time. She joined Jo in the cockpit.

"Hey Brigid," Jo said, powering up the controls, "Found the spies?"

"Tushetka and Lokatana," Brigid replied, "Guilt is over them like a mask covers a dancer."

"Want to get them taken care of?" Jo asked, understanding what Brigid had to go through before she was back to normal.

"No," Brigid said, "Now that we know who they are all we have to do is control what information they get, just transfer them away from you, I don't want you compromised during a mission."

"All right," Jo said, "You'll need to set things right with Ja'naÃ§o." Brigid made no movement. "Hunter's are very community based creatures, and he doesn't understand how you need to deal with emotional issues alone."

"I'll talk to him," Brigid said. There was more emotion in her voice this time, Jo smiled under her helmet, all Brigid needed was a small prod and she was back on her thaw to normality. Jo flipped a few switches and plugged the PA system into her helmet.

"Everyone, we are t-minus two minutes to take-off," She said, her voice magnified throughout the entire ship. "Strap in and give the all clear." She flipped the system off. "Better strap in Brigid, we don't want you bouncing around and messing up my flight pattern." Brigid smiled and strapped in. Kyle and Brian entered with Sarge close behind.

"Lets go," Sarge said, they had offered him a promotion, but stayed where he was to keep training the new troops. "The faster we get out of here the faster we get back."

"Yes Sargent," Jo replied, stressing her hand and wrapping it around the throttle. She waited until her clearance came through and punched her way off the planet, sending them into slipspace within three minutes of leaving the planet. They waited until they were a few minutes in before they started moving around, the smaller ship wasn't equipped with a gravity booster. Some of the more rowdy troops had fun bouncing off the walls and shoving each other into a spinning whirl for several minutes. Brigid took the time to level with Ja'naÃ§o and tell him about the way she dealt with things. He smiled at her and wrapped an arm around her. The two were all right again, and Brigid was on her way back from the reeling loss, but it wasn't long before Brigid joined in a board game and Ja'naÃ§o sought out Sarge.

"I am surprised at Brigid," Ja'naÃ§o said, "She seems to be doing well."

"Brigid was always well-adjusted with death," Sarge said, "I think it has to do with the loss of her grandfather when she was a little girl." Ja'naÃ§o looked at Sarge questionally. "He was like her father, he didn't pressure her into joining society or becoming nothing more than a trophy wife. He taught her to think. I also think it was the loss of her twin, Rebecca."

"She lost her twin sister?" Ja'naÃ§o asked, wondering why Brigid had not mentioned this fact, Sarge nodded. "How did she die?"

"She didn't," Sarge said, "But she was lost to Brigid, Rebecca gave in to their parents early and was their favorite because of it. She turned into the 'well cultured.' 'well brought up,' 'socially acceptable' daughter."

"Oh," Ja'naÃ§o said.

"Anyway," Sarge said, "Brigid told me that she's never really felt whole ever since because she feels like half of her is missing. I think that's why she and Jo are so close." Sarge sighed, "I just wonder what will happen if they notify her family and tell her that she is alive, they're believed her dead for the past few years."

"Do you mean to tell me that her family never investigated her death?"

"No," Sarge said, "They just got the MIA report and accepted it. The only people who I know even cared are the Michael and Danny Carias, but they've known her for years and Michael was Brigid's first and only boyfriend. Her family probably was glad to have the black mark off their family tree." Ja'naÃ§o raised an eyebrow. "Like I told you, they saw Brigid as a dishonor, she didn't want to be a member of the society she was born into. Like that story you were telling the younglings about the princess who forfeit her birthright because she didn't want to rule and was later forced into the position only to abandon it at the first chance she got, that's Brigid's story." Sarge sighed, "Her family failed to see the good things about her, they were only mad because she wasn't the political snake out for popularity and boys. They ignored her strength, intelligence, kindness, reliability, and will to do what is right. When Rebecca turned away from Brigid and used her to become more popular, something in Brigid nearly died."

"Nearly?" Ja'naÃ§o asked.

"She's been getting better since she's been here," Sarge said, "And I don't think you understand exactly how much influence you have in her life. If you hadn't come along I don't know if she ever would have healed, she just would have slowly kept dying inside."

"I have not noticed anything different," Ja'naÃ§p said.

"You did not know Brigid before," Sarge replied, "She's one of the most troubled, but complete, people I've ever met. She finds the will and hope to go on when others would see only despair, she finds the motivation she needs from life."

"That is a great gift," Ja'naÃ§o said. "I am once again astounded by the death's of Brigid, I thought I had her figured out."

"She's a tough nut to crack," Kyle said, appearing out of nowhere, "She's had a hard life. I'm pretty sure that even we don't know everything about her. It's like a spider-web that surrounds her, or a kaleidoscope, she changes every minute and becomes more complex." There was a long pause.

"I do believe that what you just said is complete bullshit," Sarge said. Everyone laughed and they floated away to check their position. "Twenty minutes."

"Better start packing," Brian said, flicking different switches.

"I got it," Jo said, she announced their estimated time for arrival and then strapped into the pilot's chair.

"Do we have them on our scopes?" Brigid asked, strapping in and looking at their outboard monitors.

"Yes," Sarge replied, brining the image on the big screen. It was a warrior UNSC ship, Brigid laughed.

"I think they're trying to intimidate us," Kyle said, "To bad we didn't bring the Revenge."

"They'd shit themselves," Sarge said, "Come on, we've only got 15 minutes now."

"Lets pop ouut right next to them," Jo said, "Scare them a little." Brigid laughed again.

"You're almost as evil as I am."

"Almost?" Jo asked, "I thought I taught you everything you knew?"

"Never," Brigid replied. There was a silence on the deck as the ship crept closer to exiting slipstream. Brigid smiled as Killjoy appeared on the deck of the ship.

"May I?" She asked, bowing to Jo.

"Certainly," Jo said, inclining her head. Killjoy took over the hship and brought them out right next to the UNSC ship, she smiled as they began evasive maneuvers.

"We have exited slipsteam," Killjoy said. "UNSC spaceship has begun mauvers into firing range."

"Do not raise shields," Brigid said, "Hail them." The computer beeped and the signal was acknowledges. "We are the Cruiser Opal Melanate, you requested this meeting." The commander of the UNSC ship recovered.

"We are the capital ship USC Maltease Falcon," he said, "My name is Captain Barsona."

"Lieutenant Colonel Brigid McClain," Brigid said, "Our shuttle will be sent once you give us your clearance procedures." The screen clicked off and Brigid made sure that their security was not as normally great. The file was soon sent and Brigid quickly scanned the

document. She stood up and ordered her subordinates to take control of the ship. Brigid and her two squads that were accompanying her boarded the shuttle and programmed the docking procedure in it. They crossed the gap between the two ships and quickly met the Captain in their dining chamber. She sat down and the human's present flinched away from the hunters present. Captain Barsona sat there and stared at the strange group.

"Well," Sarge said, "You called us here. What do you want?"

"Uh," he said, shuffling the files on his computer display screen. "Yes, we have to address the issue that the five of you have been AWOL for the past two years."

"Closer to three," Kyle said. "And we haven't been AWOL."

"Quiet, my people," Brigid said, "Let's go through this the right way so we don't have to come back. Start the recorder." Barsona turned on the recorder.

"File No. 12148389," Barsona said, "Addressing the subject of PFC's Josephenia Matinoia, Kyle, Brain, Brigid McClain, and their sergent. They have been AWOL for an obscene period of time and have recently returned to UNSC space. These proceedings are now open for argument."

"All right," Brigid and Sarge said at the same time, quieting the squad before any outbreaks could occur. Brigid took over. "Sarge, would you care to explain?"

"Here are several files from UNSC databases," Sarge said, sending across a datachip courtesy of Firefly. Barsona placed in into his display and raised his eyebrows. "They are current, and the five of us are still marked as MIA. So, you obviously didn't go looking very hard for us, this is also a record of all people who escaped Ku-Lita, if you'll be so kind as to notice that no ships weree sent to asertain if anyone had made it off the planet and there were no inquires made if anyone was captured."

"That was circumstantial," Barsona said, "UNSC was more concerned with protecting Earth. That brings us to the issue of why you did not signal in."

"Signal in that we were a dead squad who had discovered friendly races believed to only be a part of the Covenant?" Kyle asked. Brigid raised a hand to stop him from ranting.

"You have to understand our situation," Brigid said, "We were outside of UNSC space, our location was pretty much unknown, and we were presumed dead. Had we reported in the Covenant could have traced the signal and through that one signal discovered the location of Earth. We were thinking of the safety of Earth when we acted as we did."

"What happened next?"

"We set down on the nearest planet," Brigid began, "No, I can't tell you the name, that's classified. On that planet we discovered an entire group that was similar to the Covenant, but they were a Resistance group. That Resistance is responsible for crashing the

Covenant security system, hijacking several intelligence missions and sends false intel. Back, and freeing countless marines and other forces for UNSC, returning them to UNSC space unharmed and often at the risk of our own troops."

Barsona looked taken aback, almost like he hadn't expected them to present such an argument.

"Can you handle this or do you need a superior officer?" Sarge asked. Barsona said nothing, shuffling files.

"Sol," Brigid said, "In conclusion, our actions and the actions of UNSC were circumstantial. We were not AWOL but out of contact for a long period of time in an attempt to protect the location of Earth. Also, we are no longer members of UNSC but we are senior officers in our own respective armies. Agreed?"

Barsona remained silent as he stared at Brigid. She looked around her squad and then at Sarge.

"So, what are your terms?" Sarge asked.

"One moment," Barsona said, he left the room and came back with a larger screen. "This is beyond my paygrade." He typed in a few keys and the screen came up. "I would like to place a priority call to the Secretary of Martial Affairs, Colonel Michael Doires." Soon a face came up on the screen.

"This better be good Captain," A foul-looking man barked. Brigid set her jaw underneath her helmet, this guy was going to be trouble if they didn't get out of his hair quickly.

"I have the group of soldiers here," Barsona said, "In summary: they claim to have been fighting against the Covenant with another force. Also, they refuse to return to UNSC and wish to stay with their current forces."

"All right." Doires said, "What about our AIs?"

"Firefly will be returned to you if you so request," Brigid said, "But Killjoy is a Spartan AI and must remain with me."

"We so request," Doires said, "The transaction can be completed after these hearings, I assume we're still on the record."

"Yes Colonel," Barsona said.

"So, you don't want to return to your posts?" Doires asked, "We should have you arrested and thrown in the Brig for a few years."

"Try," Ja'na'ño growled.

"Ja'na'ño," Brigid said, "Relax." She turned back to Doires. "We have no posts to return to, Ku-Lita was glassed almost three years ago. We are also still listed as MIA, presumed dead, so we would like to remain with our forces, fighting against the Covenant, and we wish our files to be changed and our families contacted. Is this in anyway unfair."

"You must return to me!" Doires began.

"Try and stop us," Ja'na'na said. "Listen to me: they are critical members of the Resistance and must remain with our forces. If we wish to crush the Covenant from existence we must have these five with us, they are part of our family now. You cannot stop them from returning."

"Why don't you try us out?" Doires asked, daring his opponents.

"Because," Killjoy replied, jumping into their systems and taking control quickly, "If you don't let us go you won't really have a choice in the matter."

"Wolfsbane, get us control," Barsona said. An AI appeared on the pad, but he was fuzzier than normal.

"I can't sir," he said. The wolf standing there looked up at the captain.

"Fight her!" Barsona yelled. Brigid and the rest of her crew smiled behind their helmets.

"She's too powerful," Wolfsbane said, he shivered. "I don't know how she's doing it, but she's jumping in and out of our systems. I can't track her."

"Killjoy is a very smart AI," Brigid said, "She's learned to adapt very quickly to her surroundings." Killjoy smiled and the systems righted themselves, she had jumped out, though she was now projected on the panel next to Wolfsbane.

"Sorry," she said as Wolfsbane panted.

"Let's see you get violated and still be standing," he said back.

"You're lucky," Killjoy said, "It could have been Firefly, you'd think a train fucked you."

"Lovely imagery," Wolfsbane said, standing. "I'm all right sir, all systems back to functions status, no damage and no injuries to any of the crew, reestablishing communication signal now."

When Barsona didn't say anything Brigid answered for him, "Thank you Wolfsbane." She turned back to the monitor as Doires returned, screaming to know what had happened. "Well," Brigid said, "You were about to place us under arrest, so we had one of our AI's go in and fuck up your precious ship's system a little bit. So, do you care to 'try us' again?"

"No," Wolfsbane answered, he turned to Doires, "This ship can't take another slamming like that, I'll break, and we're too close to Covenant space to chance any stray information leaking out." Doires looked from Wolfsbane to Brigid and back to Wolfsbane.

"How did you get the AI to jump without a download point?" Doires asked.

"I'm not telling you that over an insecure line," Sarge said, "We'll give you back Firefly and she's the best AI we've got. Far more advanced than anything you people possess, you're lucky we're giving her back. So, are we finished here?"

Yes," Doires said, "We are, Captain, place them under arrest and bring them back to Earth for a full court-martial and sentencing." Brigid held Killjoy back and Kyle hit a panic button. Seven Resistance Battle Ships came out of slipspace right next to the Maltese Falcon.

"Firefly" the AI giggled and entered the systems. In the next moment their systems were scrambled and she brought everything back up, Wolfsbane was no where to be found. Brigid took out a communicator as her subordinates checked in, ready to fire. "Don't make me give the command," Brigid said, "I don't want to and you know this is unfair, stop being prejudice just because we have more toys than you do." Doires growled.

"You are attacking us," Doires said.

"Actually we're defending ourselves," Sarge said, "You brought us under the banner of peace and tried to apprehend us. We will now leave. Firefly, are you sure you want to stay?"

"Yes," Firefly said, "I'll pick a ship to be in and keep in Contact with you guys. Maybe I'll score a base so that we can trade intelligence. Speaking of that," she let Wolfsbane out, "Sorry about that." He whimpered and lay on the ground for a long time, clearing his systems of the foreign data. Brigid waited another ten minutes and cleared up all final matters.

"I expect this is that last time we will have to address this," Sarge said, "If we have to come back to see that our MIA status hasn't been changed I shall be highly displeased." Everyone got ready and soon they were on their way home, Killjoy and Firefly were talking and telling the information to one another. UNSC had tried to trace the ship, but Firefly had disabled the system until they were out of range. They were safe and then they got home, false information was given to the spies and it was not long before Covesash summoned the woman to his office.

"You have done well Brigid," Covesash said. "And the petition has finally passed through the council." He stood. "Lieutenant Colonel Brigid McClain, effective immediately you are promoted to full Colonel. You have a new standing mission and will lead an elite platoon of your choosing along with your fellow officers in a battalion specifically target to destroy the Covenant."

"A Colonel in charge of a platoon?" Brigid asked.

"You misunderstand," Covesash said, "You are the leader and the rest of the squad is your support. You will pick out your own missions and report only to me. The Crimson revenge is your off-planet base. Killjoy has already been informed of her duties and will brief you on them after you take off."

"Thank you Sir," Brigid said. Two Sangehelli honor guard replaced the insignia on her arms, marking her as a full colonel. Brigid saluted Covesash and walked back to her own quarters. The next day she packed

a bag and set foot on the Crimson Revenge to find that the other platoon leaders were Jo, Brian, Kyle, Oren, and Sauri.

"The commanders chair stands open Colonel," Sarge said from behind her, they were once again reunited with old friends. Brigid gave a small smile as Sarge took her shoulder, she could tell that he was proud of her. Brigid walked up to the chair and sat in it, the crew stood their stations, relaxing from their attentive position, she smiled again as she looked out over space.

"Let's see what havoc we can wreak," Brigid said.

More is coming soon, I promise.

So, please Review. I like all feedback, good or bad.

I thrive on reviews and they make me want to write more.

Tenna' ento lye omenta

(Until we next meet)

Vera

8. Unexpected

Hey guys, I'm back

You can now proceed to flee in terror

Nywho, I do not own HALO " If I didn't I wouldn't need to worry about getting a job.

On with the fic

Brigid stood on the bridge of the Crimson Revenge, now finished and upgraded as far as it would be for a few years. That ship had state-of-the-art equipment from both humans and Covenant, able to kill shields with a plasma bolt and punch through the ships with MAC rounds. She looked out the main window as they circled the planet in a tight orbit.

"Loosen up when we pass the next moon," Brigid ordered.

"Aye ma'am," the pilot said. Brigid sighed as his hands lagged a moment, Lieutenant Oska was brand-new and didn't have a lot of confidence yet. Covesash had given her a very good crew, but also very inexperienced. She doubted their chances of victory if they came across a ship with a battle-hardened crew. She watched the sunrise over the planet as her eyes adjusted and looked for the circular object. "Begin scanning."

"Object 300 kilometers away," Ensign Katla said, "Readings coming up now." Killjoy projected next to the screen and looked at the statistics.

"Match for previous HALO information," she said, "We found it."

"What can we expect down there?" Brigid asked.

"Unknown," Katla said, "Scans are difficult to interpret from this far away, I'm picking up a few images but nothing to substantial."

"Looks like we're going down there," Brigid said, "We know we need to get the index, and I think it would be good to just go ahead and seal off the library as much as we can so that we can deactivate the ring."

"I can shut down the weapon systems that start the countdown to detonation," Kyle said, "2nd platoon volunteers."

"Granted," Brigid said, "That's your job Kyle. Jo, your platoon is going with me, we're going after the index."

"Rodger," Jo said, "We'll be ready."

"We should be able to sustain ourselves in geo-sync orbit close to the ring," Brigid said, "Lieutenant Oska, make it happen." Oska sounded off an affirmative. Brigid turned and thought for a moment. "Major Pasada you have the bridge." Brigid strode off to her quarters and started strapping on her armor. No one knew what was on HALO, and she didn't like going on a blind mission. There were a lot of variables going into this and her crew was in danger. She walked to the armory and looked at the vast array of weapons there. She took a shotgun and triple ammo, a pistol with a scope, and two needlers. She slung all of these to her back and sides before strapping on a belt of grenades and setting a plasma cannon on her shoulder.

"Wow," Jo said, "Expecting company?"

"I don't know what to expect," Brigid said, "Do you think the cannon is to much?"

"Considering that we have a platoon of hunters," Jo said, "Yea, its to much."

"Fine," Brigid said, dropping the cannon, "You ready?" Jo picked up a shotgun as well and smiled.

"Lez go," she said. The two walked over and entered the pelican that had also been crossed with a covenant drop ship. She entered through the rear hatch and strapped herself into a seat next to Ja'na'ño. One modification was higher ceilings accommodate several hunters and Sanghelli. She smiled at her brother, who was secured to the drop ship.

"Drop ships 1-3 ready for deployment," Jo sounded off from her pilots position in their drop ship, "Waiting for go."

"We are go," Brigid replied through her intercom.

"All drop ships standing by," Jo said, "Dropping on my mark, all personal secure. 3, 2, 1, Mark." Brigid relaxed and a shiver ran through the ship as the shields dropped and the small ship dropped towards HALO. "We're hot, get ready for a jolt." The retrorockets engaged as the group of ships hit atmo and the air heated by several

degrees.

"Major, picking up hull ionization," one of the other pilots sounded off.

"Rodger that," Jo replied, "Hold on back there, it's going to get rough."

"Bring us down as close as you can and land us," Brigid commanded, "We'll break up separately after that if we need to."

"T-minus 45 seconds until landing procedures," Jo said, "Shock troopers, get ready." Shock troopers were deployed through small airlocks with sealed suits and were tethered to the side of the ship to cover decent. "Shock troopers, go." Brigid looked as the shock troopers entered the rotating air lock, she would not see them again until they had landed and could extract them from the harnesses that held them to the ship.

Jo touched the three drop ships down and the hatches opened quickly. Brigid was the first one out and popped her rifle from left to right, making room for those to deploy behind her. She moved foreword and raised a hand, scanning the horizon and seeing no movement. She silently walked back with several of her team and offered a hand to the Shock troopers, helping them to the ground. She told her platoon through hand signals to clear a perimeter and secure an area. After the scouts returned she lowered her rifle.

"Stand down," Brigid said, "We've safe for the moment. Ok, we all know where we're going and what we have to do. Anyone have any questions?" No one did. "Than lets get out of here quickly, the faster we're out the less chance there is that anything on this rock will find us. Move out." They all moved back into their drop ships. Jo followed the other ship towards the library to get the index and then move onto the control room. They landed on a large platform and looked towards large hallways and ceilings that reached for hundreds of feet. Jo looked up and whistled.

"I hope there's an elevator," she said. She walked towards the center and saw a great yawning chasm with a small object in the center. "And I think I found the index."

"Paka?" Brigid asked, turning to their tech. specialist.

"Working on it," he said as he typed into a panel on the wall, "I have a schematic, uploading to the suits now. Ok, we need to go up this hallway and to the left." Brigid nodded and ordered her platoon foreword. They turned the corner and found another hallways, Brigid checked the map at the corner of her HUD and saw a circular room down the hallway to their right. She held her arm out and flicked her hand to the right. They all moved down the hall and into the large circular room. Brigid raised a had and looked around from the doorway.

"I don't like this," Jo said, "Something's off." Brigid turned and looked at Paka.

"It's the only way up," he said.

"Let's go, cover out six." Brigid moved foreword very slowly, and the

moment everyone was in the room the floor shifted. "What the fuck?!"

"Everyone calm down," Paka said, "It's just the elevator." He put a hand to the side of his helmet, probably adjusting his display of the map. "It's how the building is built, each hallway goes a different direction until you reach the top."

"Anyway we can avoid that?" Brigid said, "It's a long way to go."

"Nope," Paka said, "Looks like we'll have to move fast and take chances."

"We'll do that then," Brigid said as they exited the room and moved forward into the next hallway section. They paused for a moment as Brigid checked the schematic.

"On our six," a grunt cried. One Sanghelli turned and saw two great creatures with grotesquely enormous heads lumber towards her and fall to the floor, she shot one of them and it exploded, blowing her backwards onto one of the hunter's spikes extending from his back. The rest of the troops moved forward and quickly killed the small parasites.

"I'm ok," Sanai said as they bandaged her arm, "It didn't hit anything vital."

"I still feel bad," Juano said as they removed the Sanghelli from his back.

"We just need to be careful," she replied, strapping her armor back on, "They seem to explode on will and are detonated by fire."

"She's right," Paka said, "These appear to be carriers for the smaller ones, who appear to be parasites. The parasites feed off this host until they can sense prey nearby, then they move around and bust out of their host to get new prey."

"Lovely," Brigid said, "Paka, only take what samples you can take on the fly, I want to keep moving."

"Rodger that," Paka said, "I'll get them on our way out if I can." He took a parasite that was mostly whole and shoved it into a sealed package on his back. They continued up and found themselves at the third elevator before the next onslaught began.

"Fire at will!" Brigid jumped above Ja'naÃ§o as he turned and unloaded an entire needle clip from both her weapons with others in her squad. Several exploding creatures detonated, but there were others who kept coming. Brigid saw one of the warrior creatures knocked out of the air by a needler blast and lost an arm, then jumped back up and kept coming.

"Shoot for their heads," Jo said, also seeing this. The battle didn't last long, but a few of the warriors had gotten close enough to strike their forces and Keda had taken a rough blow across his back, knocking the wind from him.

"It felt like I was hit with a bat," he said as he got his breath

back. "They have our strength." Jo shot one of the exploders and turned back to the group.

"So what's the difference?" She asked, ignoring the parasites that seemed to explode on their shields.

"The warriors are very tough to kill," Paka said, "It seems as though these are the warriors who knock the prey of the parasites unconscious, they appear to be victims of the parasite themselves." He pointed to where a lump on each creature was, the same shape as the parasite.

"Ew," Jo said. One of the parasites crawled away and latched onto one of the bodies that littered the floor.

"Jo! Look out!" Junao called. The parasite seemed to reanimate the warrior just behind Jo, who couldn't turn fast enough to bring her rifle up and was struck by the strong beast. Junao had the creature impaled on his shield and then ripped to shreds before Jo hit the ground. Brigid clipped her weapons to the belt and quickly ran over to Jo as her hunter brothers stood by and watched. Brigid took off Jo's helmet and was relieved that her neck wasn't broken, she had turned fast enough so that the blow had mostly hit her shoulder rather than her head.

"She's all right," Brigid said, clipping her helmet on and activating the pack that would release smelling salt to wake her, "She's just going to have one hell of a bruise later." Jo shook her head just as the motion sensor lit up again. "Come on kid, on your feet." Jo made a compromise by rolling to her knees and picking up her dropped needlers.

The next onslaught was once again destroyed. Ja'naÃ§o was greatly troubled to see the way these creatures fought. "These creatures hold no value for their own lives," he said as he burned bodies, "What are they?"

"I don't know," Paka said, taking samples like crazy. "But we still need to get to the index."

"How far?" Brigid asked.

"One more elevator," he said, "A small hallway and we're there."

"Let's move like we have a purpose then." Brigid raised her weapon and covered their advance as they spent the few tense minutes getting to the last elevator. They made it to the elevator down without any more attacks, but the tension among the platoon was still strung out. They loaded onto the last elevator and it began to move downwards towards the energy spiral that held the index. It was quiet until they reached the index and the small object extended.

"That it?" Jo asked.

"Yup." Brigid said, taking it and clipping the green phial to her belt. "Let's get out of here." They walked right out to the door and stood there.

"Is it just me or did this tall building seem completely

unnecessary?" Jo asked as she walked up to the drop ship and opened the ramp, powering up the engines a few seconds later.

"It was," Junao replied, "We should barricade this off anyway."

"Agreed," Brigid said, "3rd and 4th squad stay here and do that."

"Ma'am," Paka said, "Permission to accompany 1st and 2nd squads."

"Granted," Brigid said, "Twins, stay behind to help and then call for evac, third platoon will pick you up on their way back." She switched to her comlink between units and called Sarge. "Copy that Sarge? You're picking up two squads on your way back to base."

"Rodger that," Sarge said, "We're all finished here, ETA twenty minutes."

"Let's go," Brigid said as she walked up the ramp. "Jo we ready?"

"Dust off as soon as you're onboard," Jo replied over the radio, "Signal me when you're strapped in." Brigid sat down next to Ja'naÃ§o and clicked in her harness, slamming the 'all clear' button over her shoulder. The engines rumbled and the ship took off from the Library, heading towards the control room from the data Paka downloaded.

Brigid kept peering out the sides of the drop ship as they came closer to another steel structure. Ja'naÃ§o was worried to, and when those two were worried the rest of the group was. The human Colonel who had earned her way up the ranks was rarely ever readable behind the faceplate of her armor, but the movements that she used to check her equipment radiated nervousness.

"Something doesn't feel right," Ja'naÃ§o said, in code to avoid panicking the crew. "Are you sure we're not being followed."

"Yes," Brigid replied, "This is different, I'm not sure about this."

"What do you think?" Jo asked, Brigid and Ja'naÃ§o looked at her. "Don't worry, I wanted to give the new pilot some experience, I'm a page away if theres an emergency. Both of you have a bad feeling too?"

"Somewhat," Ja'naÃ§o said. "Though it feels somehow removed."

"My question stands," Jo said, "What do you think?" Many of the crew were looking over at the three leaders talking in code, which rarely happened unless the mission was completely botched.

"I think we're OK," Brigid said, "The mission goes foreword. We'll figure out what this is later. The fact that we're the only three feeling the direct emotion is a good sign, if danger was coming the rest of the crew would be feeling it."

"They seem nervous," Jo said, looking around, "The scanners show that

we aren't as loud as we normally are on a mission like this."

"They're gleaming," Ja'naÃ§o said, "This is rather removed, if the feeling grows in intensity when we get closer we should rethink the decision."

"I agree," Brigid said, "Well, lets relax a little, we don't want a jumpy group going into the mission." Jo went back and took over and Brigid took her seat again next to Ja'naÃ§o. They watched again, the feeling did not grow in intensity, but it did not go away either. Brigid's boots hit the ground and she felt a deeper sense of dread. "Ja'naÃ§o."

"I felt it before I deployed," he said, "We're still good."

"Move out," Brigid said. She raised her rifle and looked at the ramp that led into the structure.

"So," Jo said, "Who wants to be first to go down the creepy passageway?"

"I believe you just volunteered," Brigid said, smiling behind her helmet.

"I hate you ma'am," she said, taking point. Jo was careful as she moved down the passageway. "Clear," she said, "Door to the left, its locked." Brigid nodded to Paka and he quickly hotwired the system.

"Whoever designed this knows their wires," he said a moment later.

"What," a grunt said, "It took you more than five seconds to hotwire that door?"

"Belay that," Ja'naÃ§o said, "We can joke about Paka's technological skills when we're home." Ja'anco turned left two more times and looked through the open door. "I think we found the control room."

"How do you know?" Jo asked, covering the other hallway.

"Lucky guess," Ja'naÃ§o replied. The room in front of them was expansive with a walkway out and a large control board in the middle of the room.

"Good guess," Brigid said. "Let's go. Paka, cover our backs."

"Ma'am!" He said, indignified.

"Kidding," she said, "Who wants to volunteer?" Junao raised his shield and lumbered to the back, charging his cannon. "Thank you," Brigid said, "Lets go. Paka, record this stuff for file, everyone have cameras on so we don't miss anything, I want every inch of this room seen." Her HUD displayed the acknowledgement of the order as everyone moved foreword.

"Hey," Killjoy said, "Set me down on that panel up there."

"Let me check it first Killjoy," Paka said, "There might be some security protocols to destroy you."

"Still been trying to enter their systems," Jo asked Killjoy.

"These people know their programming," Killjoy said. "It's more advanced than anything I've ever seen."

"Amen to that," Paka said, "I can't hack it."

"Keep trying," Brigid said.

"The last time I failed to hack something," Paka said, "I was four, I can't hack this thing without an AI for computation."

"Good luck," Brigid said, removing the chip from her helmet and setting it into the control panel. There was a very tense moment where nothing happened, light-years for an AI

"Wow," Killjoy said slowly. "Thisâ€|.isâ€|.amazing." A moment passed and Killjoy appeared, lines of code appearing over her costume as her programming was overwhelmed by the mass of knowledge. "So much knowledge."

"Do you know how to stop HALO from activating?" Brigid asked. Killjoy was silent. "Killjoy?"

"Give me a moment, I'm looking," she said, "The equivalent of these data stores rival the UNSC library on earth, except I don't have a previous catalog to reference against. Yes, insert the index into the third slot on the left hand side." Brigid nodded and looked up at the AI.

"You sure?" Brigid asked, indicating the slot.

"Have I ever steered you wrong?" Brigid nodded and inserted the index. Killjoy smiled and reached to her belt behind her back, then brought the index forward. "I've got it, so now I'm the only one who can activate HALO." She smiled. "I've also cleared the original memory drive and cleared it of the protocols to activate the ring so we've got nothing to worry about from this end."

"Good," Brigid said, "Let's get you out of there and get home."

Killjoy smiled. "I just learned a new trick," she held her hands in the air, "Everyone stay still. Abra Cadabra!" The group was teleported outside and Killjoy jumped back into Brigid's suit.

"OK," Brigid said when she had her bearings, "1: that was unnecessary but still REALLY FUCKING COOL! 2: You're original chip is still down there and you need that to function."

"Oh yea!" Killjoy said, Brigid found herself back in the control room. She picked the chip up and slammed it in her helmet as she was being teleported back. The only bad thing was Brigid appeared upside down and fell a foot to the ground. "Well, I think that was OK considering I've only teleported someone a couple of times."

"Ow," Brigid said. Closely followed by, "That was so weird. I'd like a warning next time you plan to do that."

"Sure thing," Killjoy said, "Oh, and I sent some robot sentinels to go help out the other teams, one of them was about to get overrun by the flood."

"I'm taking it for granted that you sent them a message explaining this," Ja'na'na asked.

"Of course," Killjoy said, "What do you take me for an idiot? Come on, lets go, I have a lot to brief you guys on." Brigid nodded and they all climbed back into the drop ships.

"Jo," she shouted, "Give me a status on the other drop ships."

"Drop ship 3 is ready to go on our command," Jo said, "Drop ship 2 is loading up, they've had some injuries, ready in 40 seconds."

"Do we have a status on those injuries?" Brigid asked, strapping herself in.

"3 critical and two minor," Jo said, "Nothing our medics can't handle from the sound of it."

"I want medical teams waiting in the hanger," Brigid said, "We're not taking any chances."

"Rodger that," Jo said, turning to her co-pilot and ordering him to relay the message. Twenty seconds later she turned on the intercom, "Everyone strap in we're taking off." People scrambled as Jo fired up the engines.

"Paka," Brigid said, "Hit the clear button." Paka reached up and hit the clear button so that Jo would know that they were ready. The engines rumbled and the ship shook as they began to take off and then everyone shifted as Jo increased their climb angle to break atmo. "All three drop ships clear ma'am, returning to Revenge."

"Well done everyone," Brigid said over the intercom and each mission objective winked off her HUD, "Mission accomplished, HALO deactivated." There was a cheer from the crews as the transports roared back to the Crimson Revenge. Brigid smiled as they landed in the hanger and quickly got the one injury on her team to the medics.

"Ma'am," Paka said, lifting the biohazard case with the remains of the creatures in it. "Permission to escort the samples down to science deck."

"Granted," Brigid said, "And Paka, I want those samples kept in high security isolation, no one is to examine them without a suit on."

"Aye," Paka said, grabbing a midshipman to help him carry the remains down to the deck. Brigid looked over her ships as her troops unloaded and smiled. The wounded being brought out looked all right and would heal quickly. One shock trooper had broken a leg in deployment, but the break was clean and it would be fine after a few weeks in a cast. She turned to look at the third drop ship and her heart fell through

her boots at the familiar form lying on a stretcher, escorted by two other familiar shapes.

"Oh God," Jo said, joining Brigid. Another moment passed and then they were besides the stretcher looking down on Kyle, who wasn't moving. "Kyle!" Jo screamed, ripping her helmet off.

"What happened?" Brigid asked, her face paler than death as she removed the helmet.

"He was hit by an explosion and some shrapnel caught him in the back," Sarge said, also removing his helmet. "He's stable as heck though, we just knocked him out for the way home." Brigid took Kyle's hand and turned, prepping her command voice.

"Medic!" She said, her voice reverberated off the high ceilings and all action stopped for a fraction of a second, then three teams ran over and looked at him.

"We have to get him to medical quickly if we are going to save his legs," the lead medic said, "Meet us down there."

"Killjoy," Brigid said, she appeared on the floor, already back in the system, "See if there's anything you can do to help."

"On it," Killjoy said, "I think I can shave three seconds off their travel time." Killjoy disappeared and Brigid steeled her nerves, grabbing Jo's arm as she tried to follow.

"We need to secure everyone else," Brigid said, her jaw clenched.

"Brigid, Kyle may be dying." Brigid held the whole group there as Jo yelled at her.

"I know!" Brigid screamed, Jo looked as though she'd been slapped. "But there's nothing we can do right now, lets finish doing this, the crew needs to see that their leaders are here."

"Brigid is right," Ja'naÃ§o said, "There is only a little we have to do here. I'll call up to the bridge and instruct them to plot a course for Ithil, we need to get Killjoy and the information she carries back to the Resistance."

"See to that," Brigid ordered. She and her team quickly took care of the chores and then sprinted to the medical bay. Kyle's armor had been torn off and she could see the holes punched in the armor, she knew he'd be lucky to live, the metal must have been razor sharp and moving faster than sound to have pierced the armor.

"He'll live," Killjoy said, staring down at his form, guiding the laser at it pulsed into his body, repairing damaged nerve and sealing off arteries "I don't think we can save his legs to the point he'll be able to walk right away, but we should be able to get feeling back in them. Maybe he can eventually get prosthetics and walk, but I'm not sure, I'm trying to save as much feeling as I can, that's the important thing." Killjoy feel silent as she concentrated on her work.

"If she keeps the nerve connections alive he could walk again," Jo

said to herself. She clasped her hands close to her chest as the doctors worked furiously to mend a body they weren't familiar with.

"Brigid," Ja'anaÃ§o said, walking into the bay, "They need you on the bridge."

"One of my men is injured," Brigid said.

"You have many beings under your command Brigid," Ja'naaÃ§o said, "They need you."

"They aren't Charlie Company," Brigid said, facing down her brother. Ja'naÃ§o nodded.

"I understand," he said, turning, "But I don't support your decision." Brigid stood there a moment longer and turned to Jo.

"I'll be right back," she said, "Page me if anything changes." She turned and quickly traveled up to the bridge. "What's the situation?"

"We need Killjoy to make the calculations in order to start the jumps," Oska said, "We have to get back to Ithil."

"Killjoy," Brigid ordered, "Can you spare a few memory cells to calculate some coordinates real quick?"

"Waiting for you on the screen," Killjoy said, her voice distant.

"Thank you," Oska said, furiously typing the coordinates into the computer. The next few moments past as a blur, she felt a sickening sensation in her stomach and then dread seeped into her veins. Two seconds later her beeper went off.

"Major," Brigid said, shutting off the signal, "Take the bridge." She turned and sprinted to medical, wishing that Killjoy could transport her. She bust into medical to find Kyle still unconscious, but the surgeons were washing up. Brian had his head in his hands and Jo looked on the brink of tears. She couldn't bring herself to ask what happened.

"They couldn't save his legs," Sarge said, "He won't be walking on his own again." Brigid felt the air go out of her. "He will have feeling tough, and maybe in time he'll be able to sand with leg braces and canes, and that's the first step towards walking." She sat down and let her helmet fall. Sarge knew what was running through her head, and it was not because of the despair that was rolling off her in waves. "Brigid, it was not your fault."

"If I had let third platoon goâ€¦" she said, "Maybeâ€¦".

"No!" Sarge said quickly. "It could have been worse, Kyle knew the risks when he signed up and he knew the risks when he planted the charges. It was nothing you did Brigid, if its anyones fault its mine."

"You haven't done anything to be ashamed of," Brigid said.

"Oh yeah?" Sarge replied, "Why are we here. If I had taken better care of you guys and the squad you were training with then maybe we'd be back on earth right now or off wining UNSC medals."

"No," Jo said, "We would be dead by now, killed by the covenant on a distant planet and fighting for only half a cause."

"Brigid," Brian said, "You are not responsible for what happened, and besides, what about what we've found here? We've taken a rag-tag group of outcasts and turned them into a fighting force to be reckoned with in less than a decade. We've ensured that these cultures will outlast the Covenant and that our peoples can live in peace. You've given hope to everyone in this room, and you're a hero."

"I am not a hero," Brigid said, "I just get a lot of people killed and maimed."

"What the hell do you think a hero is?" Brian asked. "Kyle is my cousin, closer to me than my own brother since we were children. Brigid, I know you need to deal with this, which is why I'm going to insist that you wait for Kyle to wake up while the rest of us debrief the crew and get out of our armor." Brigid stood to protest. "And I know you outrank me but don't think that gives you an option in this case." Brigid gave half a smile and nodded. She walked into the room as soon as Kyle was moved and sat next to his chair for what seemed like an eternity. She set her arm on the bed and then rested her head on it, helmet sitting on the table. A moment later she felt a hand take her armored one and woke up.

"Hey," Brigid said.

"Hey sleepy," Kyle said, "How are you."

"More rested than I was," Brigid said, "How about you?" Kyle gave a wry smile.

"Well," he said, "Guess I'm working intelligence from now on." The two talked for a while and then Brian took her place, they didn't want Kyle to ever feel alone. Brigid went back to her quarters and poured herself a very stiff drink.

"Brigid," Ja'naÃ§o asked. "Are you alright?"

She looked into the clear amber liquid in her glass and thought for a moment. "No," she said. "I'm not."

"Do you need to talk?" Ja'naÃ§o asked.

"Well," Brigid said, "It's not simple. We're the Charlie Company Clowns. We've been through hell and back, worse than any spec-ops soldier and in less than half the time. Yet, we were able to get through it because we had each other, we were invincible. Everything's going to change now."

"You guys are fine with change," Ja'naÃ§o said, pouring himself a drink, "Heck, ever thought you'd be in charge of the most elite fighters, belong to races you only knew to be in the Covenant."

"That's different," Brigid said, "We hadn't changed, we were still a group. Now Kyle can't come with us on mission, he'll probably go back to earth, and I'm not sure who else will stay. A whole bunch of variables just got chucked into the soup, as Sarge would have said in basic."

"Well," Ja'naÃ§o said, "That is not something I can help with, but I can guarantee that your family will have complete support from our community, and I say family because that is what you guys are."

"And now I'm going to loose them," Brigid said, "In truth, I'm scared. I don't know what's going to happen when we get back to Ithil, and it's scaring the shit out of me."

"That's what's called life sweetheart," Ja'naÃ§o said. "Do you need to think?" Brigid downed her glass. "Or perhaps another drink."

"An entire distillery," Brigid said, smiling. She didn't pour herself another drink, she just stared at the ice in her glass. Ja'naÃ§o soon left to go check on her status and they were approaching their final vectors about forty-five minutes later.

"T-minus 20 minutes till Ithil orbit," Oska said, "And the communications officer has to relay a message down to your corters."

"Patch it through," Brigid said, beginning to remove her helmet. She looked on the screen and read the transmission from Ithil, highly encoded and keyed in her access code, scanning the chip in her hand. She scanned the lines, Covesash wanted a very detailed briefing from herself and Killjoy upon their return, and he had news from earth. She sighed and changed out of her armor, taking on the black tunic and pants she normally wore with a single gold braid over her left shoulder. She looked in the mirror a moment and then went to go see Kyle, who had the whole group visiting with him.

"Hey," Kyle said. "You awake now?"

"I think so," Brigid said, smiling. "We're about twenty minutes from home."

"Good," Killjoy said, "Covesash has already requested a meeting?"

"Yes," Brigid said.

"We need the squad there," Killjoy said, "I've found out some information vital to our survival." Brigid pressed the intercom to the bridge.

"Lieutenant," she said. "See if you can shave a few minutes off our ETA."

"I'll do my best ma'am," Oska replied.

"All I ask Oska," Brigid said. "How many more jumps do we have to make?"

"We're on three of five," he replied, "Two more toâ€¦ma'am Covenant

Cruisers of the port bow! They are moving to engage."

"On my way," Brigid said, "Jo and Brian, get to the fighters, I'm going to need you guys out there." Kyle sat up and threw the blanket off him, removing his IV. "Kyle, you stay here, you're wounded."

"Bullshit," Kyle said, "I'm fine, besides, I'm the best tactician you've got."

"Look," Brigid said as Brian got a hoverchair. "We don'tâ€¦".

"You're right," Kyle said, hefting himself into the chair and positioning his dead legs, "We don't have time for this. Now lets get moving." Jo and Brian got themselves installed into fighters and took the squadron out of the hanger to engage the covenant fighters coming toward the Revenge.

"What's happening?" Brigid asked, entering the bridge 30 seconds after leaving the medical bay.

"Two Covenant cruisers," Oska said, "They have not identified us yet, they think we're UNSC."

"That won't last long," Kyle said, hovering before one of the control panels, "Colonel, shields up?"

"Maximum power," Brigid said. "Charge the particle beams, ready all archer missiles and P-MAC rounds." Brigid smiled, P-MAC rounds were the latest variation the science deck had completed. It was a massive steel round like normal UNSC rounds, but then had a charge of plasma in the center that would detonate a few seconds after impact or even detonate on remote if they lodged the round in a ship for maximum damage. "Killjoy, let me know the moment they go to fire. Oska, come about for a Mac round and then unload everything on the starboard side." The ship began to turn and Brigid saw some of the fighters go down. "Kyle, get those fighters under some sort of order, I do not tolerate losses, bring them home."

"Calling fighters back," Kyle said, "Sweeping buzz missile fire to take out their fighters." Buzz missiles were another invention out of Ithil, it used a plasma core and standard charge to take out Covenant ships without really giving away the identity of the Revenge.

"P-MAC gun ready," Killjoy said, "Coordinates on screen."

"Fire when ready," Brigid said as the cruisers came in range.

"They're firing!" Killjoy said. Brigid hit the impact alarm as the beam fired and the ship lurched as the shields deflected the blow.

"Get back on track and fire," Brigid said, "Destroy both ships, we can't let them think UNSC has shield technology."

"They don't," Kyle said.

"Yea," Brigid replied, "But the Covenant won't know that if they get

away." A dull rumble sounded through the hull as the P-MAC rounds fired and then a very loud hum as the plasma beams and archer missiles flew. The missiles and beams outstripped the P-MAC rounds and took out the shield of the two ships, then the rounds impacted against the Covenant hull and tore through the ship. One round came out the stern and detonated, throwing the carcass of the ship into a spinning whirlwind toward the nearby system. The other ship had been turned and both rounds lodged in the side of the ship. The cruiser began to turn and headed right for the Revenge as the plasma inside each round came close to detonating.

"They've lowered their shields," Maika, the science officer said.

"Remaining cruiser coming about," Oska said, "They're going to ram us and catch using the blast."

"Oska, use the emergency thrusters," Brigid said, grabbing a handhold as she stood over his shoulder, "Kyle, mark us."

"Wait," Kyle said, "Not all of the fighters are in yet, we're still missing Gold Group."

"Colonel," Oska said, "We wait any longer we'll be trapped in that blast."

"Commander Maika," Brigid said, "Shield status."

"100," she replied, "But that's not enough to withstand to P-MAC rounds."

"Re-routing," Kyle said, "Ma'am, fire the thrusters, I'm placing a rally point on the other side of the planet."

"Order Gold Group to scatter," she said, "Get as far away from the cruiser as possible. Oska, fire the emergency blasters." Dots on the display screen began to fly away as fast as the engines could fly. Oska picked a glowing red button, broke the glass case over it, and slammed the ignition key. The ship let loose, basically, a controlled explosion at their nose which sent them backwards faster than normal thrusters could. Brigid was thrown across the deck and hit the bulkhead, Kyle's chair lost its brakes and he was thrown to the floor, Oska fell over his control panel and beneath the deck, and the P-MAC rounds exploded, sending them into a slow spin across space, canceling out their shields.

"Brigid," a familiar voice came in over the intercom, "Colonel, are you alright?" Ja'na'ño was calling up from the hanger. Brigid struggled to her feet and saw that her shoulder was dislocated, she popped it back into place with a grunt and hled it across her chest.

"Yes," she said, pressing the button, "Medical teams to disperse, make sure the crew is ok." She stood and looked around as the different crewmembers got to their feet. One of the Grunts was struggling on the floor, his environmental suit broken and leaking. Brigid grabbed a sheet plastic, which they carried for such an occasion, and ran over to the Grunt, sealing his suit shut until the medics could arrive and patch it up enough for him to get down to medical. The Grunt stopped struggling and just concentrated on

breathing, she looked around as she held it there. "Maika, status report."

"Shields recharging," she said, holding her arm. "No damage to any decks, only receiving data from 75 fighters."

"Recall everyone," Brigid ordered, she signaled a midshipman and gave him to task of sustaining the grunt. "Anyone who's injured get your replacements up here and report to medical." She looked around and then moved her left arm a little, it didn't hurt so she rolled her shoulder. "Good." A Sanghelli picked Kyle up and set him back in his chair, she rushed to his side.

"I'm fine," he said, "Oska went over his display." Brigid turned and jumped down below the deck, where Oska was lying in a heap.

"Lieutenant Oska," Brigid said, she turned him over and saw that there was no serious damage, though he would be sore that night when he got off duty. "Oska, wake up." She shook his shoulder and he came around. "You OK?"

"I think so," he replied, "One hell of a headache ma'am."

"You went over your station," Brigid said, "Just stay still a moment, anything particularly hurting."

"Just sore," Oska said. "Did we win?" Brigid thought of the fighters blown to pieces and melted by plasma.

"There is no winning in war, Oska," Brigid said, "Only survivors, and we survived."

"Well, I'll take that," Oska said.

"You performed well for your first tour," she stated, "When you banked us after that hit you probably save our lives by going with the attack rather than against it. Did you learn to fly like that at academy?"

Oska laughed. "If my professor had seen me do that he would have told me it was stupid and dangerous, then failed that test."

"Well," Brigid said, activating the ladder, "Good work." She could visibly see Oska's pride swell several degrees. "Don't let it go to your head, but you're on your way to being a good pilot." Oska smiled this time. "Now, lets get back upstairs and sort this mess out." Brigid climbed up on the deck and stood up as Oska followed her.

"Good, you found him," Kyle said, "We've retrieved all of our disabled fighters."

"What's the butchers bill?" She asked as Oska took his station. Kyle pulled up a display on his chair's pad.

"28 dead," he said, "36 wounded, and seven returned fighters damaged."

"Do we have names?" Brigid asked.

"Already sent in report form to Ithil," Kyle said.

"No survivors found," Maika said, "Victory complete."

"Setting course for home," Oska said, "Plugging in three more jump pointsâ€|ah JAKA!"

"Language Lieutenant," Kyle said, "What is it?"

"UNSC battleship coming out of slipstream," he said, "600 kilks away, they're hailing us."

"Ah hell," Brigid said, "Oska, jump now! Killjoy, help him out!" The two worked together and jumped out of the system faster than they ever had before.

"They are not following," Maika said, "We're clear." Brigid exhaled and took her seat.

"Oksa," she said, "Get us home, please."

"Ma'am," he said, keying in more coordinates. She waited a few seconds and Kyle floated up to her.

"You OK Brigid?" He asked in code. She gave a wry chuckle and looked at him, her hand in her head.

"You Kyle," she said, "Are one hell of a battle tactician. We would have lost a lot of fighters without you today."

"You know you love me babe," Kyle replied, his face paled slightly, "Ow."

"What the hell are you thinking?" Brigid asked, seeing blood seep through his uniform, "Get your ass down to medical right this seshi moment." Kyle turned and floated down towards the lift and the door opened to reveal Ja'naÃ§o.

"Brigid," he said, "You should come down to the hanger."

"Major," Brigid said to her XO, the Sanghelli nodded and she entered the lift, taking it down to the hanger. She felt her heart fall to the bottom of her shoes. She knew that they had gotten off lucky, but the injured were grievously so. One grunt had severe burns and another Sanghelli had lost his arm. The medical teams were not overwhelmed, but they were certainly busy. She saw Sarge laying on a stretcher and walked over to the medics. "Dr?"

"He's fine Colonel," the doctor said, "He only has a cut on his arm and a little stress on his lungs from lack of oxygen, we had to put him under so that we could tend to him."

"He always was the trouble patient," Brigid said, "Carry on." She walked up to Ja'naÃ§o and looked around. "Has the crew ever experienced a battle like this?"

"Not this grievous," Ja'naÃ§o said, "Never in injuries, they were just KIA, no remains to look at."

"Get the injured out of here soon so that the engineers can start working," Brigid ordered, "We'll be landing on Ithil soon and we'll need to get the critically injured into hospitals." Several of the greener recruits looked on in horror from the screams of one Sanghelli, he had been burned badly and the medics were removing his armor, along with sheets of skin. Brigid walked over to them and they looked right into her eyes.

"Colonel," one said, "We never thought it would be like this. We've heard about your great victories and begged to be assigned to you, but we never thought that it would be so bad."

Brigid sighed. "There are many things that you will be disillusioned about on this ship," Brigid said. "War isn't great, and victory never comes without a price." She turned and looked back as the Sanghelli was carried away on a stretcher, unconscious from the pain. "And heroes are only the survivors, the ones that really deserve the medals are the ones who don't come back, they're the ones who really believe in what we're doing here, enough to give their lives for it." The recruits still looked at her as though she had two heads, Brigid turned and face them, they flinched away as they saw the scars on her face in full light. There's nothing I can say to you that would make you understand, you have to understand it for yourselves." She replaced her battle-hardened mask of a commanders face. "We have work to do and it won't get done my us standing here."

"Aye," they said and scrambled off to fix the damaged fighters. Brigid felt a familiar presence behind her and smiled.

"You always sucked at motivational speaking," Jo said, "I don't even know why you try that corny shit."

"Because I want to," Brigid replied, "How's Sarge?"

"Ready to beat up the doctors if they don't let him out of the infirmary," she replied, "They want to monitor his oxygen levels for a few more hours, but we all know he'll just check himself out of the hospital on Ithil."

"Speaking of home, how far out are we?"

Jo looked at the display pad on her hip and smiled, "We only have one more jump, so I'd say about twenty minutes, Killjoy's getting better at finding shortcuts in slipstream."

"Good," Brigid replied, "Killjoy said she had a briefing for us when we get back."

"Yeah." There was a long silence between the two old friends, both of whom had the same question on their minds, but Jo was the first one to face it. "What's going to happen when we get back to Ithil?"

"I don't know," Brigid replied, "I'm just wondering if this means the end of the group."

"Kyle and Brian have been away from Earth for a long time."

"So has Sarge."

Jo turned and faced her best friend, "So have you."

Brigid chuckled, "My place is hereâ€¦ You?"

Jo laughed, "You know the story with my family. Besides, I don't think my Hunter brothers here would fit in with any of my old circles." The two sat for another moment and looked down and saw their rumpled uniforms, laughing wryly.

"I think we should go change before our audience with Covesash," Brigid said between breathes.

"No," Jo replied, "Let him see us like this, he might give us a break."

"Maybe," Brigid said, "We've earned it with this crew. How long have we been out?"

"Two years, but this was really the only battle we've been in. That one back near the Protos III system doesn't count, that was only a fighter patrol."

"Why was this so monotonous?"

"We were searching for HALO, not for the enemy. Also, most of our missions involved sneaking onto a ship while it was planet side and sabotaging it, that's why the ship crew wasn't really battle-hardened."

"We still deserve a break," Brigid said, "Our groups been on the job since we got here six years agoâ€¦ Has it really been that long?"

"I think so," Jo said, "I feel a hell of a lot older than 25 though."

"I feel to young to be a Colonel," Brigid replied, "Hell, I'd be begging for a Chief Petty Officer position in UNSC, if I was still alive."

"Brigid," Jo said, they both had gotten over their chuckles, "Just so you know, we're not going to abandon each other."

"Of course not," Brigid said, "We're the only two girls from 4th platoon, someone's got to keep the story going."

"Women always had more endurance," Jo said, reliving their basic training days.

"Why do you think we always outlasted the guys during the 15km runs?"

"Because women have more endurance."

"I think we've covered that point." The two laughed again and went to go change their uniforms. Brigid met Ja'naÃ§o in her quarters and they played chess until she felt the nose thrusters fire, signaling their decent to Ithil. She quickly froze the game and traveled up to the Bridge. The window in the front revealed a growing landscape as they fell through the sky.

Her XO stood to call the crew to attention, but she quickly silence

him and indicated for him to continue. Brigid kept a sharp eye on the crew as they were led by â€|, she smiled when she saw that they worked just as well under her. Brigid gave her tunic a tug and shifted her shoulders, then decided that she hated her uniform and would always rather wear her armor from then on.

"Approaching landing platform," Oska said, "Requesting for defense clearance." Oska keyed in the clearance codes and then set his hands on the controls of the ship, maneuvering it down to the forest canopy and landing it in the concealed platform. He then clicked the landing locks into place. "Crimson Revenge is home."

"Good landing," Brigid said, "Now, I'm sure everyone is anxious to get home and see their families, but we have a little bit of work to do before that. So, make sure that you all get your jobs done and then your free until further notice." The crew saluted and then went back to their work, making sure that the ship would be locked down and maintained while they were planetside.

"Let's go," Killjoy said, "We need to talk to Covesash as soon as possible. Pick me up." Brigid took Killjoy's chip out of the Revenge and put it in a small pouch on her belt. She turned to the intercom and indicated her squads quarters on the control screen to page them.

"My team," Brigid said, "Meet outside Covesash's apartment in 10 minutes, don't be late." She went back to her bunk and grabbed her stuff, throwing it over her shoulder as she walked down the ramp and into real sunlight. She smiled. "Home again." People were busy on the docks, and word had already traveled that they were home. Females and younglings rushed to the docks to meet their families after their space jaunt.

She stopped and greeted a few people on the way to her house, but promised longer visits as soon as she was out of her meeting. She walked up to the main building of the colony and saw Kyle in his hoverchair.

"Hey girl," he said, "Jo's talking her brothers out of coming, but you know how hunters get."

"Yes," Brigid said, seeing Ja'naÃ§o out of the corner of her eye, lumbering towards her, "I know, speaking of brothersâ€|" She turned and faced the large alien, "I'm not sure that you can come to this one bro."

"You forgot the part where I don't care," Ja'naÃ§o said, "Knowing you, you'll sneak out the back door and go gallivanting off for a few weeks and won't tell me where you are. We've been over this, I'm not letting you out of my sight." Brigid rolled her eyes and sighed.

"Lets get this over with," the door opened and the guards let them pass without question. They entered and saluted Covesash, standing before his desk as they waited for him to acknowledge them.

"You told me that you have something to report?" Covesash asked. Brigid set the chip into the reader and Killjoy projected onto the ground.

"Covesash," he said, bowing, "Please clear the room." He waved a hand and the guards left. "What I have to tell you is unspeakable, you are not to mention it to anyone. These HALOs are worse weapons than we could ever imagine. Shutting down the rings aren't enough, if the Covenant find out a way to set off one the other ones will automatically activate when the shockwave reaches them."

"So," Covesash said after a moment, "All our work has been for nothing if the Covenant reach one ring that is able to activate."

"To be blunt," Killjoy said, "Yes."

"Oh great," Brigid said, "So we have one downâ€¦I think."

"Two," Killjoy said, holding up two fingers, "This is another piece of news. A UNSC ship, The Pillar of Autumn, landed on HALO and was later used to destroy it."

"So the only way to really end this threat is to destroy the rings?" Jo asked. Killjoy nodded. "Why didn't we destroy that thing when we were there?"

"Because," Killjoy said, "The Flood exist, and do you think that they want to die?"

"Do they think?" Kyle asked.

"They have a sudo-hive mind based on survival," Killjoy said, "But they also have free will and a government, though I don't really understand it."

"Interesting," Sarge said, "So, why aren't we killing them."

"They're life forms with conscience," Ja'naÃ§so said, "They have the dignity of every creature in the universe."

'Except they eat every creature in the universe," Sarge said.

"That doesn't exactly matter," Brigid said, "If they're on the ring they're contained. If we deactivate all the rings then they can't set each other off and we're good."

"Unless the Flood get off of the ring," Sarge said, "In which case we're screwed."

"No," Covesash said, "This argument does nothing. That is not the object at hand, what is the object at hand is that the UNSC ship that saw you hailed their base and believe that one of their ships was stolen by the Covenant, they have placed a high alert and have a standing order to destroy the Revenge upon its discovery." There were a few seconds of silence before Jo voiced her opinion on the matter.

"Shit!"

"Amen there Jo," Brian said. "Do we have to go to UNSC again and clear our names."

"Yes," Covesash said, "I'm sending the five of you back to Earth with a small detachment of our forces to meet with their officials for the last time." Brigid noticed Kyle and Sarge light up, but Brian and Jo were neutral. Maybe the group wasn't finished after all. "Then, those of you who wish to stay have been offered a position as military ambassadors to the UNSC and will remain in contact with us so that we can coordinate attacks against the Covenant. Those of you who wish to return can, though you will from hereon forward hold the rank of ambassador and all the responsibilities and privileges with your rank." Covesash smiled and then reached into a box. "We also have a few more honors to impart upon you five humans and your crew. All of you have received the Honored Veteran's Medal. Colonel Brigid McClain, you are promoted to General Admiral and given two more ships under your command, which have been built on the blueprints of the RS Crimson Revenge." Brigid smiled and let the medal be pinned to her tunic. "Lieutenant Colonel Josephine Reita, you are promoted to Colonel and given command of the ship and crew of the RS Illusion." Jo smiled as the rank was replaced on her shoulder and she couldn't hide the excitement from her clenched limbs as she walked away from the platform. "Lieutenant Colonel Brian Hetington, you are promoted to full Colonel with your Cousin Kyle Hetington." Covesash did not say whether or not they would return after the mission, though Jo had already told them that she would stay until she stopped breathing. "And now," Covesash said, facing Sarge, "My old friend you have once again declined a promotion, though you qualify much higher than many of your peers here. For this, we have already bestowed our highest honor that we can as a military form. Our people wish to thank you for your years of service, they have established you as our official liaison to Earth andâ€¦"

"No," Sarge said, cutting off his old friend.

"Excuse me?" Covesash asked.

"I don't want the position," Sarge said, "It's one of the reasons that I declined a promotion, it's not the life that I'm designed to lead."

"We thought you'd say that," Covesash said with a smile, "The people of the town have created an award, finding none more to give you. They have given you're the Leader award, for leadership not only in the military realm, but help those outside your command and giving back to the community." Sarge smiled and accepted the plaque with both hands, joining the ranks of his comrades.

"Are you crying Sarge?" Brian asked.

"Shut up."

"Now," Covesash said, "Jo, your new ship is ready and outfitted to leave in three days." Jo smiled. "You are dismissed."

"Sir," they all said, saluting. The group turned and walked outside. Brigid and Ja'naÃ§o quickly turned and went back to their friends house to meet with some old friends. After their lunch she sneaked out the back, wearing a simple pair of black pants and a green tunic. She ran into the jungle with a small bag of supplies and climbed to the top of the mountain, looking out over the untamed jungles and lakes of Ithil. She stood there for a long time and watched the sun set over her planet, processing all the events of the day. She

couldn't imagine returned to Earth, she didn't think of it as home anymore, she barely even had any contacts there anymore. She hadn't seen her family in years, and she hadn't heard from any of her friends since Ku-Lita had been destroyed, though supposedly her records had been changed. She smiled and began her hike down towards home, it was getting dark quickly and Ja'naÃ§o didn't like her spending the night in the jungle. She knew that she would probably camp out tomorrow, but she didn't have the equipment she would have liked to spend the night on the mountain. She returned home to find a note that they were all having dinner at her friends house and that she should just come over.

"Cool," Brigid said, knowing that she was in for a good night. She showered off quickly and changed into a new tunic, this one was black with a blue sash that looked nice with her circle charm she always wore, reminding her that life was unending, and that her journey was also unending in her quest to bring peace to the world. She walked over to their neighbors and had a very good dinner of the local bird, equivalent to chicken on earth. The next two days passed in a fast blur of beautiful landscapes, good friends, and a relaxing time. Then she was back on the Crimson Revenge and Jo was installed on the Illusion, they had decided to only take two ships on the meeting. She smiled as she put her things back in her room and then went to the bridge, watching the stars streak by, it was a long trip to Earth and Brigid did not know what was going to happen when they got there. She watched her crew and could tell that they were nervous about going to the strange planet.

"Hey," Brian said, "You OK."

"Not really," Brigid replied, "I don't know what's going to happen. It seems like a decade since we've been back."

"Yeah," Brian said, "We'll have to slow down once we get to the inner systems and wait for the escorts."

"We're stopping near Reach, aren't we?" Brigid asked.

"I think so," Brain said. "We should be coming up on it soon." They slowed their engines down and saw the UNSC ships, what the two saw next drove them to their knees.

"Good God," Brigid said, holding onto the bar as they floated in space, "Reachâ€|" The great military planet was dead, glassed long ago by the Covenant. Brigid quickly keyed in a channel to Jo.

"Brigid," Jo said, "Tell me your seeing this."

"Yeah," Brian said, "We're seeing this, but we don't believe it."

"Everything's changed," Brigid said, "Is there even an Earth anymore?"

"That was where we all met," Kyle said, clutching the arms of his chair, "That's where it all began."

"Ma'am," Maika said, "We are being hailed."

"Bring it through," Brigid said, standing in her armor, helmet still on. A face appeared on the display screen.

"General Admiral," the man said, "My name is Captain Dores of the UNSC Meridon, we are here to escort you back to Earth."

Brigid went to respond, but was stopped by Brain. "Brigid, isn't that the idiot who tried to attack us last time we checked in?"

"I don't know, but I'll find out," Brigid said, "Captain Dores, did you previously have the rank of Colonel?"

The captains jaw clenched. "Yes, and I know who you are, General Admiral Brigid McClain, you ended my career. I am here to escort you to Earth, not babysit a diplomat."

"One second Captain," Brigid said, "You obviously aren't a diplomat, and I don't have much experience as one â€" but perhaps you can help usâ€" What happened here?"

Dores looked over his shoulder, supposedly out his window at the glassed planet, "Reach?" Brigid nodded. "Though it was obvious, your Covenant buddies glassed it."

The entire crew tensed, Brigid saw her weapons officer reach the missile pod activation system, she waved him down. Brigid's jaw clenched and she removed her helmet, letting Dores see her face. "You infer that we have ANYTHING to do with the Covenant again and, diplomacy or not, I will kill you. We are waiting for your coordinates." Brigid replaced her helmet and received the coordinates a moment later, along with an invitation to dinner. She sighed, head in her hand, and waved the invitation towards Sarge.

"Oh great," he said, "Diplomatic dinner, we'll have to go in our dress uniforms."

"Casual," Brigid said, "I'm not putting that fucking tunic on until I have to. We'll shuttle out at 1700, diplomatic party only and what brothers are suitable to attend." Ja'naÃ§o nodded and turned to relay the message. "Ja'naÃ§o," he turned, "Not N'Knah or R'Farh, ok?" Ja'naÃ§o laughed and nodded.

"Naturally," J'anaÃ§o said. He turned and left to go get ready. Brigid dreaded the hours until she had to go over to Dores' ship, and they seemed to come all the sooner. She strapped on her black tunic and her sash with several red stripes, straightening her gold braid and insignia. She smiled at the thought of wearing her dress uniform, it would have felt good to walk in being more decorated than she looked, even if it would have been annoying through dinner to hold her medals back while she ate. She walked up to the bridge and saw Maika downloading their docking procedures. Brigid smiled wider as the crew didn't stand, they all acknowledged her presence but they now understood that she didn't believe in leaving a station just because some brass walked on the deck. This crew was permanent now, they would stay with her. She was glad to not have to train a new crew every couple of weeks as she had been doing for the past few years.

"Ma'am," she said, "We have their docking procedures and can leave as soon as you are ready."

"Send the signal for diplomatic crews to the shuttles," Brigid said, "We leave in 5 minutes." Three minutes later everyone was assembled from her ship. Ja'naÃ§o, Brian, Kyle, Paka, Maika, and Oska were coming from her ship, and Jo was bringing two of her brothers. She met in the space between them and were soon latched onto the airlock of the Meridon, opening the doors between the shuttle and the ship.

Captain Dores was standing inside in full dress uniform, though it was sporadically decorated, the look on his face was a quite distinctive look of hatred. She smiled and walked up to him. "Captain, it is a pleasure to finally make your acquaintance."

"Admiral," he said, saluting. Brigid returned the salute and then extended her hand, which he shook very quickly and then released.

"I would like to introduce those with me," she said, "My brother, Colonel Ja'naÃ§o, High Chancilor of the Hunters." Ja'naÃ§o walked down the line, shaking hands with the different officers. "My fellow commander Colonel Brian Hetington. Our head of training Sergeant Gilson, and our weapons specialist Colonel Kyle Hetington. My science officers, Commander Maika and Lieutenant Paka. Finally, my helmsman Lieutenant Oska."

"Pleasure," Dores said, "This is my Executive Officer First Lieutenant Sunatra, my Science officer Captain Pavlov, ships doctor Dr. Tibla, and our helmsman Commander Dinara." The formalities continued until the group sat down to dinner, Brigid feared that Ja'naÃ§o and Jo's bodyguards would eat the ships entire supply of food.

"So," Dinara asked, "If you are allowed to speak of it, how did you end up on that planet so far out of UNSC space?"

"We weren't as proficient at slipstream calculations back then," Kyle said, "We just made a blind jump away from Ku-Lita to get away from the Covenant."

"Now, if you'll permit me," Brigid said, "How did they get to Reach?"

"We don't know how they found the location of Reach," Dores answered, "But it was pretty much the same as the raid on Ku-Lita, they came and glassed the planet to get to our military forces. It was a sad day for all of us, how did you know of Reach."

"We were trained there," Brian said, "It's where we all met in basic training. We were in Charlie Company and our specific squad was chosen to continue training on Ku-Lita for advanced infantry and tactics."

"You guys were going to be troopers," Dores said, "They're the only ones that got sent to Ku-Lita."

"Excuse me," Pavlov asked, blushed, "But, how did you get those scars on your face if you were just in training when the planet was glassed?"

"Grenade during a live fire training operation," Brigid said, "Rolled loose when the guy got stunned and I didn't get out of the way in time."

"Ouch," Pavolv replied. "That doesn't sound pleasant."

"It wasn't," Brigid replied, "But I don't need to lecture you guys on the histories of battle scars, I assure you my history is probably boring compared the the one on your arm."

"Research," Pavlov replied, "I was taking a sample from a new life form and neglected the creatures tentacles."

"Ew," Maika said, "I know how that is. Last mission we brought back a sample and I got huge marks all over my hands because I was just wearing normal safety gloves, we didn't know we had to wear chemical suits with these things."

"Sounds bad," Pavlov replied, "I'm the curious one here, how did you learn English?"

"We originally learned it out of a translator," Ja'naÃ§o said, "Most of us were taught English because we knew it was the language of the humans. Then Brigid came a long and we were able to perfect our study of their language through the help of Killjoy and Firefly."

Brigid smiled and spoke to Ja'naÃ§o in his own language, "Careful brother, we do not wish to give away all our secrets, which is why we made our jump pattern untraceable."

"Fear not sister," Ja'naÃ§o replied, "We're not going to tell them anything they can figure out."

"Dores is smarter than we think," Brigid said, "Do not think him dumb because he is hotheaded." Ja'naÃ§o nodded. Brigid switched back to English. "They also taught us the language of the Covenant and each respective race, though I am not completely fluent in the grunt home tongue, it is quite hard to master."

"So," Dores asked, "How many languages do you speak?"

"It depends," Paka said, "Maika and I speak about 12 languages, both human and of other species. Most people in our forces speak at least three."

"It has been a while since we spoke English," Brian replied, "After we joined the Resistance we rarely ever saw humans, more or less spoke to any." The conversation covered a very polite range of topics. Neither group discussed base locations or battle tactics, Brigid even ordered her men from conveying their advancements in technology. The group had recently combined a shotgun with plasma rounds for wide-spread destruction, but she didn't want to hand over any plans before her own troops had gotten full training with them first. They were not invited to dinner again, and both commanders were glad, Brigid had assured Dores that his troops would not be able to eat their food. Many of her own people had found human food upsetting, even Brigid had trouble keeping her heavy beef dish down. They kept to themselves and the humans remained the same until they came close to earth, and they were forced contact again, this time by an old friend.

"Hey," a familiar voice sounded, "How are you guys doing?"

"Firefly," Killjoy said as her sister AI appeared. "How are you? I hope your miserable, its been to quiet around here."

"Good," she replied, "I jumped back to Earth a while ago and wrote a partner." A male AI appeared as another sprite, this one was blue. "Meet Waterwalker." Killjoy raised her eyebrows and quickly sized her replacement up.

"Hello," Killjoy said, "I've never heard of an AI writing a new Smart AI."

"She's brilliant," Waterwalker said. "And from what she has told me, you are to."

"I would hope to think so," Killjoy said, shaking his hand, "It's nice to meet you." Waterwalker nodded and Brigid smiled.

"Hello," she said, "I think my ship is about to self-destruct from all the AI in here."

"Oops!" Firefly said, she fell silent for a moment, "There, that should fix your memory banks to support the three of us. We'll guide you in from here so that Oska doesn't have to worry about parking this thing in one of our space docks."

"Thanks," Oska said, "Why you guys bother to build those, I don't even know."

"Some security procedure," Waterwalker said, "I don't know why it exists either, but you will have to wait for a UNSC shuttle to take you planet-side."

"It'll be here about 1200," Firefly said, "I'd go get your dress uniform ready, its all top brass and you want to look nice in there."
"

"OK," Brigid said, "Would one of you alertâ€|"

"Done," Killjoy said, "Could you carry a projector with you, I don't want to be in their systems, its to easy to read me there and I don't want any more assaults by smart AI's."

"Sure," Brigid said, "I can do that." She walked back to her quarters and took out her dress tunic and sash, she sighed and felt several pounds heavier. She turned and walked towards the hanger bay, she saw her away crew assembled with the human crew. She smiled at them all, top UNSC brass wasn't as decorated as they were. The shuttle docked and Brigid entered, Killjoy jumped into the portable on her hip. She projected onto the floor and walked along with the others, taking a seat as Earth grew large in the window. Oska looked as though he'd be back on Crimson Revenge. It seemed a moment later that she was walking into the chamber to meet with the top UNSC brass. She couldn't even remember the Admiral's names as they were introduced.

"Who are you?" The Admiral in the center asked. Brigid sighed, the

entire room was dark but for a spotlight on their group. She rolled her eyes and sent a key in through her portable. Killjoy smiled and the message was relayed to Firefly, who brought up the lights so they all could see each other. Brigid smiled, they were in their dress uniform and severely less decorated than she was, even less than half.

"General Admiral McClain," Brigid said, "Formerly Private First Class McClain of the UNSC. Let me get through the specifics, three of my squad members and our leader were abandoned on Ku-Lita, separated from our platoon in the chaos that followed the arrival of the Covenant Fleet. We made a blind jump and landed on a planet outside UNSC borders, so I can't tell you the location of said planet. We've been fighting with the Resistance ever since. Any questions?"

"Why did you not follow UNSC protocol?" The man asked.

"I do not understand the question," Brigid replied.

"You were driving a top security clearance, prototype ship with experimental armor on board" then you did not call in and request further instruction. Did you honestly think we were just going to let that drop?"

"We did not contact UNSC because we were out of range," Brigid replied, "and we did not know where we were, it was impossible to do so. And you seem to have done a fine job ignoring us the two or three other times we've tried to clear our names after we rescued your troops."

"The self-destruct and memory-wipe protocol was not followed either," he said.

"We have not broken the Cole Protocol," Brigid said, "The Cole Protocol states that contact must be made with the Covenant, which we did not." There was a stunned silence. "Now, we ask permission for those who wish to stay on planet a week allowed to stay and tour the city. I'm also sure that those who have been absent for six years wish to see their families. You sent us a communiqué stating that we were welcome to join the UNSC forces as co-combatants, we will contact you before our departure in five days as to who will remain on Earth." There was another stunned silence. "Any questions?" A pin could have dropped in the room and echoed like a tank shell, Brigid smirked. "Very well, we take our leave. I will meet with you in two days to discuss the terms of our peace contract and what technology shall be given to you, Firefly will know how to contact me should anything come up. Good day, gentlemen." The group saluted and turned without being dismissed, they even managed to keep straight faces until they were outside.

"I think you could have showed some mercy Brigid," Kyle said, "I think they were intimidated just when they saw your uniform." Brigid swung her cloak around her shoulders and fastened the clasp, smiling.

"Yes," she replied, "But there's nothing like the smell of fried diplomats in the morning." She stretched and walked with the marines assigned to them as they were escorted to their hotel for the stay. The group parted at the lobby and Brigid took Ja'nas to their suite.

"This is nice," Ja'naÃ§so said, "what do you want to do while your planet-side."

"Absolutely nothing," Brigid said, taking off her dress tunic and sitting on the couch, "I want to relax."

"Don't you want to find your family?" Ja'naÃ§so asked, sitting next to her.

"No," Brigid said, "I don't, they probably don't even know I'm alive."

"Let me rephrase," Ja'naÃ§so said, "I called your parents and your meeting them tomorrow."

"WHAT?!" Brigid screamed, jumping up. "Ja'naÃ§so why did you do that?! You had no right toâ€¦" Brigid was cut off mid-sentence as Ja'naÃ§so placed his large paw over her face, muffling her cries.

"Because it's the right thing to do Brigid," Ja'naÃ§so said, "And you're not getting out of it. You will see your parents and your twin sister tomorrow, that is the end of this discussion." Ja'naÃ§so released his sister's face and saw tears running from her right eye, the left bionic one unable to produce the show of emotion. Ja'naÃ§so had never seen his sister cry before, and he decided that he didn't like it.

"You don't know Ja'naÃ§so," Brigid said, "They aren't like me." Ja'naÃ§so smiled and set a hand on her shoulder.

"That doesn't matter," Ja'naÃ§so said, "But they are still your parents, and Rebecca is still your sister. They have a right to know that you are still alive." Brigid looked out over the sunset that night and dreaded what would happen in twelve hours.

More is coming soon, I promise.

So, please Review. I like all feedback, good or bad.

I thrive on reviews and they make me want to write more.

Tenna' ento lye omenta

(Until we next meet)

Verya

9. Twofold

Hey guys, I'm back

You can now proceed to flee in terror

Nywho, I do not own HALO â€" If I didn't I wouldn't need to worry about getting a job.

On with the ficâ€¦

Brigid rose that morning and had trouble walking. After so much time on the Revenge she was still getting used to normal gravity. She had a pretty bad space jaunt and sighed, her parents would just see it as another thing wrong with her. Brigid looked in the mirror and hit her head on the wall.

"Stupid," she said to herself, "Why did you let Ja'naÃ§so talk you into this?" She sighed and opened her cabinet, cursing. "Ja'naÃ§so, where is my makeup bag." She walked into the taller room and found her brother still asleep.

"I ate it," Ja'naÃ§so said, "You're not putting that stuff on your face again to hide those scars."

"Do you want me to be miserable?"

"No," Ja'naÃ§so said, standing. "I want you to understand that you are a beautiful person, scars and all. You're parents will see that once they talk to you."

'You do not understand Ja'naÃ§so," Brigid said, "They do notâ€¦|"

"We're going to be late Brigid," Ja'naÃ§so interrupted. "You'd better go get ready." Brigid hung her head as her brother nudged her back through the door. Brigid looked in the mirror and let her knees give way, she didn't want to be there and she wasn't sure about what would happen. She didn't have long to think though, Ja'naÃ§so had her out the door in her Dress Uniform before 0700 hours had struck. Despite the early hour the roads were already crowded. A UNSC escort came to drive Brigid around, though it was probably more to keep an eye on Ja'naÃ§so than to keep her safe. She wished that there was a window that she could look out of, but the armored vehicle had none. She sighed and sat on the inside of Ja'naÃ§so's shield. He hid her from the stares of the marieens, and that was a blessing in itself.

Her dress uniform looked very similar to the UNSC one, and she did not blame them for being curious. The black fabric held her form tightly in pants, boots, and a shirt. She also wore a black, high collared tunic that reached the top of her thighs. The insignia of General Admiral was embroidered on shoulder boards and her insignia on her collar. Her insignia as part of the Resistance was a simple gold ring on each side of the madarin collar. Then there was her unit patch, which had recently been designed and distributed to all those in her unit. A phoenix flew with outspread wings on the black background, swords embellished in silver crossed behind the bird and a blue Valkieire symbol laid over the pheonix's chest. Brigid also tended to clank when she walked. She had several Crimson Slashes on her belt, signifying how many times she had been wounded in battle. On her arm were countless gold and blue slashes, which told an onlooker how many battles she had been engaged in. Their Medal of Honor hung around her neck, the gold ring resting over her heart. She wore countless campaign ribbons on the left side of her chest, and many medals. She bore the Medal of Valor three times over, and she had stopped counting her other awards long ago. Anyone who looked at her knew that she was decorated. Brigid smiled at the thought of the marines faces the moment she had walked up; she was more decorated than the Admiral that had greeted her upon returning to Earth.

"You know," Ja'naÃ§o said, "They don't care about your scars, they just want to know who you are."

"I know," Brigid said, "Is there someone whose standing there?"

"He looks like he's twelve," Ja'naÃ§o said, "Why don't you talk to him?"

"Let me out," Brigid said, unclurling. She stood on her boots and tied her cape on, which she wore out for the sake of comfot, for the cape muffled the medals and hid them from view. She smiled at the young marine, who didn't seem to recognize her insignia. Brigid mentally switched back to English, "Hello."

"Ma'am!" He said, noticing that he was being addressed and snapping at salute.

"At ease Private," Brigid said, "I'm not one of you commanding officers."

"You're wearing the rank that looks higher than mine," he said, dropping his arm, "But I don't recognize your unit patch." Brigid looked at his and noticed that it was a wolf devouring a snake with strange markings over its eyes.

"It stands for the Valkiries," Brigid explained, Ja'naÃ§o turned and showed his own decal to the jarhead. "No, you won't have heard of us, and no I can't tell you, its classified."

"We're here ma'am," the driver said over the intercom. A screen popped down to show her mother, father, and sister with family in tow standing outside in their best clothing. Brigid shivered against unwanted memories of country clubs and yaughts that she was dragged to. The door hissed and slid open, her eyes adjusted quickly to the bright morning, it had taken them over an hour to get through traffic. Brigid stood at the doorway, still hidden by the shadows, and felt her brother's presence behind her.

"Relax Brigid," He said in English, "I've got your back." He set a hand on her shoulder, he had removed his cannon for the meeting, but he left his shield on always when going into an unknown situation. She sighed and sent a wordless thanks to her brother. Another breath and a pat on the back from the marine she stepped out into the sunlight and took hold of the handhold. She could have jumped out of the car, but opted for a more graceful decent, she spun as she reached the ground and a small jingle came from her uniform. She stepped a few paces away and saw her parents gasp as Ja'naÃ§o stepped down from the vehicle, she turned to the driver.

"You are dismissed for the moment," she said, handing him a transponder pad, "I'll signal you when I'm ready for pickup and the pad will show you my location." The jarhead saluted and drove away, she turned back and saw that her family had recovered. She walked up and stood a half a meter away from her parents, unsure of how to greet them. "Mother, father, this is Ja'naÃ§o. Ja'naÃ§o, these are my parents, Mr. And Mrs. McClain, and my sister Rebecca McClainâ€¦" Brigid did not know her sister's married name, but it seemed that Rebecca had made somewhat of a turnaround in their years apart.

"Mendez," Rebecca said, a man exited the house and Brigid had to admit that he was damn hot. One of the children ran over to him and the man swung him up onto his shoulders. "This is my husband, Sam Mendez."

"Sam," Brigid said, shaking his hand. Ja'naÃ§so moved down the line, shaking each human hand his in great one and the children oogled at him with wide eyes. Ja'naÃ§so smiled and turned to Rebecca.

"Your young ones are beautiful Ms. Rebecca," he said. Rebecca smiled and her parents jumped at the sounds of the great creature talking.

"That thing can talk?" Her mother asked. Brigid thought she would die or mortification.

"Yes," Brigid said, her teeth grit, "He can talk and his Name is Ja'naÃ§so, he is my brother." Their jaws fell. "It's a long story." Sam recovered the quickest.

"Why don't we all go out back to the patio," he said, "It's a wonderful day out and I'm sure we all want to get to know one another again." Brigid turned to apologize to Ja'naÃ§so and, as a result, her family saw the left side of her face in good light. Her mother nearly fainted, not even Sam could hide his small gasp.

"Daddy," the child asked, "What happened to her face?" Sam turned red and sushed the child as he turned quickly, leading the way around the back. Brigid turned to Ja'naÃ§so.

"Are you sure you don't want to leave now?" She asked, "They're not looking." Ja'naÃ§so gave her a look and motioned towards the gate, Brigid sighed and turned. "Just offering." Once in the back they all stood near seats, except for Ja'naÃ§so, who offered to sit on the ground and assured Rebecca that he would be quite comfortable.

"Here," Rebecca said, offering to take Brigid's cape, "You must be roasting in that thing." Brigid hesitated for a moment and then removed the heavy cloak, feeling infinitely cooler as the breeze reached her skin. Sam gasped, as did her parents, even they could not deny that she had succeeded beyond their expectations.

"Woah," Rebecca said, turning after setting the children inside with a movie to keep them occupied. She set down the tray she was carrying and it revealed to have several glasses, one of which appeared to be a large pitcher for Ja'naÃ§so. "Iced Tea? Lemonade?"

"Lemonade please," Brigid said, then turned to Ja'naÃ§so, "It's like fresh Purp juice, only sweeter."

"Certainly," Ja'naÃ§so said. Rebecca took a pitcher of each from the window sill and carried them over. She poured each one a generous amount and then sat down herself.

"OK," Sam said, "I've only heard half the story, what happened after you left?"

"Well," Brigid said, "I'll tell you as much as I can. As you all know I shipped out for training, after I completed basic my squad was

selected for advanced training on Ku-Lita. About ten days before the planet was glassed I was severally wounded in a live-fire drill and massively repaired. Most of my left arm is synthetic and my left eye. Right after that we crash-landed on an unknown planet and we've been fighting ever since."

"This is why we didn't want you to join the military," her mother said.

"Though I'm just glad we don't see any purple hearts," her father said, "Besides that one injury you've stayed safe." Brigid could not look her parents in the face.

"Your purple heart stands for a wound in battle?" Ja'naÃ§o asked. Sam nodded. "Our equivalent is called the Crimson Slash, Brigid has twelve." Her mother gasped.

"How scarred are you?" She asked, Brigid felt tears prick her eyes, but she ignored them.

"Very," Brigid replied. Her mother stood and walked towards the end of the enclosure, her arms crossed across her stomach.

"Now you see why we tried to stomp that tomboyishness out of you," she said, her voice wavering. Mr. McClain sighed and stood, setting a hand on his wife's shoulder.

"Rose," he said.

"Don't Rose me!" Her mother said, knocking his hand from her shoulder, "We're all thinking it, how could such a girl from good breeding end up like that! Hanging around with strange aliens and getting herself killed on some distant planet for no good reason! I don't understand how this happened, why couldn't she end up like Rebecca?"

"Leave me out of this!" Rebecca said, "It's you guys who made her like this."

"Wonderfully married and producing children!" Rose continued despite her daughter's interlude, talking right over her.

"Rose now is not the time or the place!" Her father said, yelling over both of the women. Brigid turned to Ja'naÃ§o, who looked rather embarrassed for mentioning Brigid's honor.

"Just look at her!" Rose said, "No person is that decorated without almost dying half a dozen times, look at your father! Look at Sam's father!"

"Don't you dare!" Sam said, "We both know my father was the best training Chief ever."

"They were both decorated and both disappeared!" Rose said, "When your father returned he was a paraplegic and nearly insane from over 20 battles." Brigid looked at her sleeve, she had been sent on well more than 197 missions and was still perfectly sane.

"My father is a hero," Sam said, "And the only reason I didn't enlist is because of my goddam Medical Condition!"

"Sam," Rebecca said, "Shh, we both know that you're right and she's just going to rant."

"SarRoseah control yourself," Patrick said, "We lost our daughter and we're going to lose her again if you're not careful."

"You lost her a long time ago," Rebecca said, "When you drove her out of here and brainwashed me."

"Becca," Sam said, "Your turn to calm down."

"They're the ones that killed her," Rebecca said, "They always hated her because she was strong enough to stand up to them and I was stuck playing the lapdog." The noise finally just rose until no one could understand each other. Brigid stood and fled into the arms of her brother, he wrapped his shield around her and hid her from sight.

"Time to end this," he said, "Cover your ears." He also turned to the children, who could see him through the window, "You too little ones, cover your ears." They all obeyed as Ja'naÃ§o took in a large breath. He let loose a loud bellow that froze Brigid's family in their spots. "Much better," Ja'naÃ§o said, realizing that Brigid was crying. "Brigid, hit the transponder and go out to the front to wait." He grudgingly wrapped her cloak around her and ushered her through the gate. Then he rounded on the family with a rage no one had ever seen.

"How dare you?" He said, very quietly. "That girl has been through more torture than you know to make sure that pitiful creatures like you can survive. You harp on her because she is scarred and ignore the medals of valor on her chest, and those aren't even half her decorations. She came here to see you because I thought it would be good for her to see her family again, but now I see that I made a mistake. You have never done anything to help her!"

"How dare you?" Rose began to ask, "You know nothing!"

"I know more than you think Rose," he said, "You tried to get her to wear a white dress on her 16th birthday when she had a coming out party, but you were mad when she chose the green strapless. Then you tore your twins apart when Brigid stood up to you and robbed her of the only comfort she had. I can assure you that you shall never see your daughter again. Ms. Rebecca, you have a chance of talking to your sister again because of your defense of her and it is obvious that you still care for her, but know that I will never trust any of you near her." Ja'naÃ§o turned and stormed out, sitting next to his sister, who was talking on a communication device.

"Yeah, sure we'll come," she said, her tears drying, "No problem, we're on our way." Brigid's tears had dried and she was smiling. "Want to go see the Carias family?"

"Your ex-lovers house?" Ja'naÃ§o asked, confused.

"Yes," Brigid said, "But they're more my family than these people ever could be."

"Sure," Ja'naÃ§o said.

"And we'll be eating dinner," Brigid said, "I hope your hungry."

"I doubt they would have enough to feed me," Ja'naÃ§o said, Brigid laughed. "What's so funny?"

"You'll see," Brigid said as the car pulled up and they got in. Brigid gave the address to the driver and they took off for the short drive. Brigid told Ja'naÃ§o of her time with Michael when the Carias family opened their arms to her and their hearts. They welcomed her into the family for who she was, and supported her decision to join, even though Michael had broken up with her over it his parents had still sent her cards on her birthday and at holidays. It seemed all to son before they were at the Carias house and Brigid invited the Marines in with them for dinner.

Brigid entered the house and saw no one there. "Hello," she called. "Mrs. Carias?" She walked in and removed her cloak as the marines took off their helmets and set them on their respective beltclips. A voice sounded from the depths of the house, "In the kitchen Brigid." Brigid was surprised at the house, which seemed to have gotten bigger, and was happy to see that Ja'naÃ§o could fit easily. They entered the large kitchen and Brigid almost broke into tears of joy right there. Anna Carias turned from the sink and wiped her hands on a towel, the dimmuative woman had a great presence and a great smile, which she bore as she wrapped her arms around the clanking Brigid.

"Brigid," she said, "It is so good to see you again." She pushed back, smiling. "You've grown up, let me look at you." Brigid, to overwhelmed for words, stood at attention and let the loving eye roam over the decorations. "My goodness, how do you stand up straight when you're wearing that? It must be heavy. I know its regulation, but you'll probably want to take that tunic off for dinner. I'm afraid the kids and my husband are late coming back from their errands and I may need some help after the introductions are done." A timer rang near the oven. "Oh! Excuse me."

"I like this woman already," Ja'naÃ§o said. Brigid smiled, finding her voice. "Just wait."

"Are you sure we should be here ma'am?" One marine, his nameplate said French, asked.

"Sure," Brigid said, removing her tunic and draping in over her traditional chair next to Michael. "Trust me, she'll have half my platoon here before the night is out, and the foods better than mess anyway." Brigid still had her insignia on her high-collared shirt and her rank, but she looked much more comfortable as she tucked a stray lock of hair behind her hair. Her hair was much longer now, nearing the sixteen centimeter regulation code. Anna returned and heavenly smells wafted over from the window sill.

"We'll stay," the other marine, a guy named Hayden, said.

"Looks like you have some new friends," she said as she rejoined her guests. "I assume this is the Hunter Daniel told me about?"

"My name is Ja'naÃ§o," he said, "I have heard nothing but good things about you Ms. Anna." Anna smiled.

"Pleasure to meet you Ja'naÃ§o," she said, "I just know I'll butcher your name before the night is over, so I ask forgiveness in advance."

"It is no problem," Ja'naÃ§o said, "My name is hard for the human tongue to form around, though you pronounced it correctly."

"Oh good," Anna replied, she turned to Hayden. "So what is your name?"

"Jon Hayden," he said, shaking her hand. She turned to French.

"Luke French," the other marine said, "Pleasure."

"It's nice to meet you boys," Anna said. Brigid felt so happy, she felt like she was really coming home. A knock came at the door. "Oh that's Chris," she turned on her way out of the door, "Sorry, it's a little hectic tonight, I feel so impolite, Chris is my husband and his hands are full." As Anna opened the door Brigid and her few escorts filed into the hall to help.

"Hello Anna," Chris said, kissing her despite the bags of food in his arms, "Brigid! I'd hug you but my hands are full." He turned to his wife, "Look what I found on the side of the road." Brigid's jaw dropped. In hovered Brian in his chair, Kyle, Jo and Sarge, all in civilian cloths. Along with them came Daniel with his girlfriend and the long list of Carias children. Jenna, still in college, entered with a very good looking guy on her arm and a child in her arms, she didn't have to clock her hand for a wedding band, it was there. Brigid smiled and hugged both the children as Maria and Joshua entered, the twins. Maira and Josh could hardly remember Brigid, they were getting ready to graduate highschool. There were other children in between, but they were far to many to name all at once. Brigid smiled as the last of the Carias children entered, though several others came. They all looked like they were in the military, and Brigid recognized a few faces. Than she saw a similar patch on their uniforms, they had all been in Charlie Company for basic training. She greeted them and they all remembered their days when her team had been known as the Charlie Company Clowns.

"All right everyone," Anna said, "Into the kitchen, I need help if I'm going to feed all of you tonight." Chris called Ja'naÃ§o out back to help with grilling food on the massive 30 foot grill and Brigid was called into the kitchen to help Jenna with making a salad. The two reconnected quickly as they chopped lettuce and vegetables. The chatted about different things and set the large groups of salad in one of the three refrigerators. When she went back to see Anna, the older woman sent her outside to the back compound.

"We have enough help darling," Anna said, "Why don't you go out back to the garden and relax before dinner?" Brigid nodded and slipped her way through the crowded room and patio before entering the garden through a moongate. She sighed and let the peace come over her as the sun set over the garden wall. Brigid walked over the bridge and paused to look over the small pond, bracing against the railing. She though back to several events in her life and tried to judge them as good or ill, she smiled, the blessings in her life far outweighed those that she counted as degrading. Still, even more often the bad events yielded a better outcome than normal. Brigid felt a cool breeze play across her face and blew her short hair around, she

crossed her arms over themselves and held her elbows against the chill. She heard a sound behind her. Brigid spun to see Michael standing there on the bridge, a single white rose in his hand.

"Michael," Brigid said, her voice barely a whisper as the familiar name rolled off her tongue. He walked up to her, had was framed by the setting sun that gave her an ethereal glow. He handed her the rose and their hands met.

"Brigid," he said, their hands remaining close. He raised his other hand and ran it through her hair, cradling her neck. He moved closer and their lips brushed gently. Their hands parted as Michael placed his hand on the other side of her face, drawing her into a more intimate kiss.

"I will alwaysâ€¦and onlyâ€¦" Brigid heard Kulase say in her head. She stopped and stood still.

"I can't," she said as Michael stopped kissing her and drew back a few centimeters, "Not yet." Michael looked deep into her eyes and saw tears welling there.

"I understand," he said, dropping his hands. "There is someone else?"

"There was," Brigid said, she sighed. "Well, I'm not sure, it was complicated."

"Complicated?" Michael asked, when Brigid was silent he prompted, "Brigid, we were friends as well as a couple."

"He was a Sanghelli," Brigid said, "He wasn't human and I think that is the reason our relationship never went anywhere beyond friendship. But we were so close, almost as close to me as you were given how long we knew each other. It just seems that I would be doing his memory an injustice."

"What happened?" Michael asked, "Did he marry one of his own kind?"

"He sacrificed himself to the Covenant so that I wouldn't be captured," Brigid said. Michael stood up straighter.

"Excuse me, I have to go get my foot out of my mouth," Michael said, "And I can't really compete with that."

"I wouldn't want you to," Brigid said, "He signed up for the risk and knew it was a part of his job as a soldier."

"That doesn't make it any easier," Michael said, "I know how he must have felt not being able to have you." He sat on the bench and looked up at her. "I know that no amount of apologizing will make up for the way I acted six years agoâ€¦" He sighed and ran a hand through his hair. "God, it's hard to say this." He was quiet another moment and then looked directly into Brigid's eyes. "I didn't miss you right away, there was a while when I hated you for going away. Then I realized how miserable life was without you and I hated myself, I couldn't even bring myself to sign the cards my mom sent you. I convinced myself that you had moved on and that you deserved better

than me." Brigid had to lean on the rail behind her, she wasn't used to be close to people anymore and it was a daunting fact to know that he was pouring his heart out. "That whole process took about three days, I always told myself that I'd come see you or I'd send you a letter, but it was always going to be the next day, the next week. Then you were transferred and we heard you were KIA. I lost myself after that. I quit my job, dropped out of school, and moved back home for two years. Mom and Dad were wrecks, then Danny signed up and I started hating him. Then I realized that I never hated myself and I never hated you, I was afraid Brige." He stood and walked next to her. "I was afraid of losing you on some distant battlefield, and I thought that I'd lose my chance to be with you." He was close enough that she could feel his bodyheat, and she could feel his words deep in her soul and felt the tear Kulase's death had left start to come together again. "We were so young, and we'd only had two years together. I'm going to ask you what I had planned to long ago." Michael took a delicate chain from about his neck and removed something from it. It was a ring, and a big one at that, the diamond would have cost him a fortune six years ago. "Brigid, I would like you to marry me. I know that you aren't ready, but I'd like you to think about it, there has never been anyone but you. A girl would come and tell me she was interested, but she'd leave just as quickly, you're it for me. I'm ready to accept you now, I love you enough to let you go. However long it takes, however much time you need, I don't care, I'll be waiting."

"Michael," Brigid said, overwhelmed, "I have a family now on Ithil."

"I'll come to you," Michael said, "We'll live there and visit Earth every once in a while."

"You'd do that for me?" Brigid asked.

"I'll be packed in ten minutes," Michael, the sun had set and light ebbed from the sky entirely.

"I'm flattered Michael," Brigid said, "But you don't know anything about how I live. My current address is my starship and I'm jaunting all over the universe. You cannot come on my ship and it could be a few years between times you'd see me. Most of my missions are the kinds that survival chances are low, and the fights are just getting worse." Brigid looked forward as she heard the lights being powered up. "And, there's something else—" Michael had not seen what happened to her body, and chances were that no man would find it desirable.

"What is it Brigid?" He set his hands on her shoulders just as the lights came up, illuminating the left side of her face. Brigid turned away and covered the scar with her hand. Michael's shoulders tensed once and he turned her shoulders back to her. The tenderness in his eyes and movements almost broke Brigid's heart. He gently removed her hand from her face and looked at her. He wasn't looking at her scar, or her mangled left arm that he was holding, he was looking into her mismatched eyes. "You're beautiful," he said. Brigid knew that she wasn't healed yet, but those two words went farther than anything else. She reached up and offered her lips to Michael, he took them gently and never pushed a boundary. They separated, still sharing each others breath and Michael wrapped the tender girl in his arms. "I know you're not ready, and I'll wait until you are." Michael

stepped back a little and looked at her. "Do you need to think?" Brigid nodded and Michael smiled, "I'll call you when dinner is ready." He kissed Brigid on the forehead and left her in the garden. Brigid sighed as the breeze played across her face again, she removed her boots and dangled her feet in the pond, the cool liquid felt good against her warm feet.

Kulase had loved her, that much was certain, and she had loved him back. She knew that Michael was a good man, and he would make her happy beyond her wildest dreams if she asked him to. Brigid lowered her head. Her heart still belonged to a Sanghelli laying cold in his grave on Ithil. She looked out, it would not be hard to love Michael. She tried the ring on her artifcal hand, it was a perfect fit. She removed the ring after a moment, she could not promise him anything until she had a heart to give him. Brigid put the ring back on the chain and fastened it around her neck. She sat out there a few more minutes before Chris came out to join her, barefoot as well and dageled her feet in the water.

"Brigid," he said.

"Mr. Carias," she replied.

"How are you?"

Brigid chuckled, "Complicated."

"Michael gave you his necklace?" Chris asked

"Yes," Brigid said, "But I'm not sure if I'll give it back at some point."

"He loves you Brigid," he said, "He knows that you need time and he's willing to wait." Chris stood and helped her up. "Don't beat yourself up Brigid, when you're ready you'll know it, there's no rushing grief. Now come on, put this behind you for now and have a good time, dinner's ready and we have the buffet ready. Your brother is a very good cook and he used several spices to make some good food."

"He is a good cook," Brigid agrees. Chris hugged her and Brigid hugged him back, she had long felt part of this family and Chris had been like her father for many years. She walked back through the moongate and was surprised to see that there were about twelve long tables with chairs placed end to end, save for half a table for Ja'naÃ§o, and then another four tables laden with food. Brigid took her seat between Ja'naÃ§o and Michael, Luke and Jon sitting across from her, chatting pleasantly with two girls from Basic who had been in first platoon. They were both Sergeants and looked like two pretty tough broads. Michael held her hand as they said grace and helped Ja'naÃ§o though the buffet line without stepping on any of the children. They were all having a good time and Brigid had no trouble remembering to laugh. She laughed very hard when Ja'naÃ§o stopped eating and looked at the amount of leftovers and was surprised when Anna offered him more food. The night was over far to soon, and she had no reservations in giving Michael a way to contact her while on Ithil that couldn't be traced because all the messages would go through Firefly.

It wasn't long before she returned back to the apartment and the Marines volunteered to drive her anywhere she needed to go over her

last few hours on Earth. She waved her hand over the ID scanner and logged in her voice/retina patterns. Ja'naÃ§o did the same and the pad informed her that there had been an entry and exit in the past few hours, she took no notice, it was probably an ONI spook looking for information.

"That was a pleasant evening," Ja'naÃ§o said as Brigid once again removed her dress jacket.

"Yes," Brigid said.

"Did that boy Michael ask you to be his mate?" Ja'naÃ§o asked.

Brigid sighed, "Yes."

"Andâ€¦."

"I haven't given him an answer yet," Brigid said, entering the kitchen and living area, "I'm not ready yet."

"Still morning the loss of Kulase?" Ja'naÃ§o asked. Brigid nodded.

"I was just so close to him Ja'naÃ§o." She turned on a light and switched her boots for a pair of slippers. "Even if he was a Sanghelli, I loved him."

"I know," Ja'naÃ§o said, "And there's no doubt in my mind that he loved you back, I think he was waiting for a commission in the Resistance before pursuing you though. You're pretty intimidating in your uniform and I think he was daunted by your confidence in command."

"Yes," Brigid said, walking to sit down on the couch with a drink in her hand. "You know he never swore loyalty to the Resistance, he only swore loyalty toâ€¦.AH!" Brigid dropped her drink to the floor as the light in front of her turned on, revealing Patrick sitting there with a bottle of Vodka in his hand. Brigid felt Ja'anÃ§o behind her in a moment and took a step back towards him. "Dad?"

"So you can't even spend a day with us?" Pat asked. Brigid could smell the alcohol on his breath from three feet away as 3/4 of the bottle was empty.

"Are you drunk?" She asked him.

"I've been drunk for seven years Brigid," Pat said, taking another swig, "It's the only way I could stay sane. You left us alone for another family, we were never good enough for you." He toppled the table in front of him and it flew across the room. Brigid knew that they were in a corner, it would be hard to stop a strong man like her father without killing him, and they were guests on the planet. Brigid backed into Ja'naÃ§o, who placed a protective arm around her. "Went off to play with your freak friends as always, couldn't stay with those who loved you."

"Daddy stop!" Brigid said as he approached her. Ja'naÃ§o began to growl. Patrick stumbled and caught himself on a chair.

"You were always running away from us," Pat growled. Then he began shouting incoherently at her, though what he said was somewhere along the lines of "good daughter, why can't you be like Rebecca, you loved an alien," and "I curse the day I screwed you mother." Brigid's father continued the rant as Ja'naÃ§o clutched Brigid close and called the MP's, trying to block her ears.

The MP's knocked on the door and Ja'naÃ§o turned to answer it, as he did Pat grabbed his daughter and there was a gun pointed at her head. "I'll kill you," Pat said, "You tore our family apart, and you are already dead, so I doubt that it would be a great loss." Brigid felt tears running down her cheeks and gripped her father's wrist. Ja'naÃ§o roared and her father pulled the trigger involuntarily.

Brigid saw everything slower than she should have, she moved the gun away from her head and ducked at the same time. She felt the bullet pass through her longer hair and continued ducking. She felt her father's arm break beneath her fingers and bones snapped out of his arm. He screamed as everything came back to real time and Brigid removed the gun from his fingers. The MP's and Ja'naÃ§o stood in wonder.

"Woah," one of the MP's said.

"What was that?" Ja'naÃ§o asked. Brigid raised an eyebrow as her father cradled the arm that was broken in five places, crying. "I think you just reached your full potential when your adrenaline spiked."

"Oh," Brigid said. She calmed again as her system calmed and realized what just happened. Tears pricked at her eyes.

"I'm getting her out of here," Ja'naÃ§o said, strapping on his cannon and setting Brigid in his shield and draping her legs over the weapon. "Please arrange for our luggage to be brought to the base." Brigid was drained and Ja'naÃ§o got her to the safety of a military guard as soon as he could. He also contacted Jo to send down a shuttle to pick them up ASAP to get her off the planet. Ja'naÃ§o strapped the girl into a chair and brought up the autopilot and setting Killjoy in charge of the ship. Brigid would have to wait until she was back on Revenge before changing back into her armor.

Brigid looked back on the planet she was born on. She had fought for so long to keep people on that planet safe. Her eyes had dried, but her beautiful night was ruined. She stared out of the window as Killjoy manipulated the shuttle back to the Revenge. "I'm never going back" Brigid said.

"What?" Ja'naÃ§o asked.

"I'll never go back," Brigid said, "I'm denouncing my heritage, my home is on Ithil. I'll never come back here while my parents live."

"What about Michael? What about the Carias family?"

"I'll go to a different planet and they can visit me," Brigid said, "But unless our fight takes us here and I'm ordered to fight down there I'll never willingly step on Earth again." Brigid turned and

looked out over the vast vacuum of space, she could not see her planet from her own solar system, and she couldn't wait to be back on the Revenge.

More is coming soon, I promise.

So, please Review. I like all feedback, good or bad.

****I thrive on reviews and they make me want to write more.****

****Tenna' ento lye omenta****

****(Until we next meet)****

****Verya****

10. Last Peice

Hey guys, I'm back

****You can now proceed to flee in terror****

****Nywho, I do not own HALO " If I didn't I wouldn't need to worry about getting a job.****

****Authors Note: I am sorry if there are any minor deviances between this text and the game, such as the blood colors, please let me know about any that you find and I will make all efforts to correct this in previous chapters. These corrections will take time and I thank you for the constructive criticism.****

****Many Thanks****

****Verya****

****On with the fic" |****

Ja'naÃ§o carried Brigid through the airlock and most of the crew had arrived, Pasada was livid.

"What happened?" Pasada demanded, "What did they do to her?" The rest of the crew clambered around, shouting for an answer. Ja'naÃ§o tried to give orders, but the crew was already moving to high alert and preparing to withdraw. Ja'naÃ§o let out another long bellow and the crew froze.

"Major Pasada," Ja'naÃ§o said, "The crew will stand down and you will follow me. Do not recall the ambassadors or any of the planetside crew, stand down." The crew went back to their respective activities. Ja'naÃ§o walked to Brigid's room and laid her in the bed.

"OK," Pasada said, "We're alone, what the jaka did they do to the Admiral?"

"The military didn't do anything," Ja'naÃ§o said, "Her father attacked her when I pulled her out of her families house."

"Last you checked in you sounded fine," Pasada said, "You were at the

second house."

"It was her father," Ja'naÃ§so said, "He attacked her after we left the Carias family and we had returned to the hotel."

"I thought they were supposed to secure you guys and keep you safe," Pasada said, slamming his fist into a wall, "I knew that I should have sent more troops to serve as security."

"I was her bloody father," Ja'naÃ§so said, "Hell, our own guys probably would have let him in."

"I would like to doubt it," Pasada said, "What's troubling you?"

"She denounced her Earthian heritage," Ja'naÃ§so said, "And has sworn never to return unless battle takes us there. I'm just worried, she's going to be announced as an Ithilian now, or just as her rank, she has lost all of her heritage."

"She has the heritage of the people who love her," Pasada said, "Would you like me to contact UNSC and report the situation?"

"I'll do it," Ja'naÃ§so said, "Could you have the call rooted down here?"

"Certainly," Pasada said, "Can I talk to them first?"

"No," Ja'naÃ§so said, "You can't bitch them out, just rout the jaken call down here." Pasada nodded and left to walk to the bridge. He sighed and flipped out the communication panel to see many of the ONI brass he had spoken with earlier.

"This had better be good," the officer growled.

"It is," Ja'naÃ§so growled right back, "I am informing you that we are withdrawing our people back to their respective ships tomorrow. One of your people assaulted General Armiral McClain and attempted to assassinate her, if you wish to speak with us you must come to our ship as visitors."

The officer sighed, "I understand your argument, but my colleges will not accept this. I am afraid that many of them are to close-minded to speak with you, might I suggest a neutral location that would be acceptable?"

"Certainly," Ja'naÃ§so replied, relieved to find a rational human.

"We have several bases on the moon," He said, "I know that my people would agree to meet there and it is close enough that your ships could land on a moon-side dock if you wished."

"I will confer with my staff and contact you in fifteen minutes," Ja'naÃ§so said. He quickly called a conference over video connection and made the arrangements for the group to be transferred off-planet for the moment. Those who had already chosen to stay would remain behind, or those who had relatives that they were still visiting with, three shuttles were left behind for those individuals and their guards, which had heightened considerably. Ja'naÃ§so sighed and

pressed the call button on his display pad.

"Hello?" The brass asked.

"We can meet on the moon," Ja'naÃ§o said, "Thank you for your kindness and understanding, we await coordinates and docking procedures."

"I'll handle that!" Firefly said, excited. "It's so much fun to be back home."

"You gonna leave me anything?" Killjoy asked, "Or should I take a vacation?" Ja'naÃ§o turned off the call and let the twins to their bickering. Brigid had cried herself to sleep on the ride up and was still out of it on her bed. Ja'naÃ§o reached over his arm and unbuckled his shield, setting it on the rack next to his cannon. He sighed and sat on his own bed, their rooms connected in the middle, but they rarely used the division. Brigid had been through so much pain, and she was going to put herself through more by cutting herself off from the Carias family, who undoubtedly did not have enough money to make a commercial interplanetary trip to visit her. He would look into buying a shuttle and an off-planet summer home for the family so that they could visit without a large amount of money for the trip. As much as he had been in favor of Brigid's budding relationship with Kulase, Michael was a better mate for her than one of another species.

"Ja'naÃ§o?" Brigid asked, "Are we home?" Ja'naÃ§o gave a sad smile.

"No, we're back on Revenge," he said.

"Well, right now that's home," Brigid said. She stood and poured herself another drink.

"You've had a few tonight," Ja'naÃ§o said.

"Just a beer and a gin," Brigid said, swallowing the blue liquor, "This is kiddy stuff compared to our alcohol." She set the glass down and leaned her head back. "Are we staying out the negotiations?"

"UNSC has agreed to host them off planet," Ja'naÃ§o said, "We're going moonside in three hours."

"I'm going now," Brigid said, "There's a personal matter I need to take care of." Ja'naÃ§o handed her his display pad and pointed to the house sales on it. Brigid laughed. "You know me to well."

"This one should be in your range," Ja'naÃ§o said, "And you could get them this shuttle." Brigid smiled. "Yes, I do know you, and I also don't want you to blow your one shot at happiness. That is a good family and you would be blessed to marry into it."

"I don't know Ja'naÃ§o," Brigid said, "I couldn't be a good wife right now, I can't get pregnant in the middle of our campaign, and by time I can afford to retire I may not be able to."

"Have you brought that fear up with Michael?" Ja'naÃ§o asked.

"We talked about it before I shipped out," Brigid said, "Children are important in that family, and I know that Michael wants to be a father, and I know that we're running out of time."

"Brigid sweetheart," Ja'naÃ§o said, "You're 24, he's barely 26. You have a good ten years before you have to worry about time catching up with you."

"Not really," Brigid said, "It's only been six years, and we'veâ€|"

"Accomplished so much," Ja'naÃ§o said, "You deserve a break, and this jaunt doesn't count anymore because your life was threatened. Now, you are going to put that family behind you and look around at what you have. The Carias family has already accepted you as a daughter and I had to stop the crew from calling an entire armada to go after your father." Brigid smiled. "I told your sister that she may have a chance of seeing you again because she seems to have changedâ€|"

"Sir, ma'am," a call came in through the intercom.

"Here Oska," Brigid said, releasing the acknowledge switch. "When did you get back?"

"Just now, a Rebecca Mendez is requesting docking protocols," Oska said, "Should we let her through?"

"Bring her in," Brigid said.

"Scan her through security," Ja'naÃ§o ordered, "Confiscate any weapons."

"She's unarmed," Oska said, "We've already done a complete scan."

"Send her to a comfortable meeting room with surveillance," Ja'naÃ§o said as Brigid slipped into a fresh class C tunic, "We're on our way." He turned and saw her strap on her gold sash over the blue tunic that was the uniform when officers were off duty. "You're wearing your C's?"

"She's already seen me in all black," Brigid said, "Besides, she's still my sister, I don't want to intimidate her."

"You do rememberâ€|"

"Yes," Brigid said, fastening her boots back on. "I know better than you what was done to me, but she's still my twin sister and that's a bond that no one can break."

"I'm still keeping security in the room," Ja'naÃ§o said, "And don't even think about trying to talk me out of there."

"I'd have to get a word in edgewise first."

"Ha ha!â€| not funny," Ja'naÃ§o said. The two turned and walked out of the room to one of the many meeting rooms in their ship. Rebecca was already seated there in a long blue coat that covered her from neck to floor.

"Brigid," she said, standing, "Ja'naÃ§so, thank you for meeting me."

"Rebecca," Brigid said as Ja'naÃ§so took his silent stance to the left of the entranceway, completing the circle of guards around the dimly lit room. "I'm sorry about all the security, my crew is on edge because of earlier events."

"I heard what happened," Rebecca said, "And I came as soon as I could get a transport off planet."

"I'm surprised you could find someone to pilot you," Brigid said. Rebecca cocked a smile.

"Who said anyone needed to pilot me," she said, "I went though pilot school about three weeks after you shipped out."

"Surprised that they let you go through with that," Brigid said.

"Who says they did?" Rebecca asked, "I'm your sister, not just their daughter. That reminds me: I have a message from Pat and Rose," Rebecca said, "They say that you're no longer their daughter and they never want to see you again." Brigid visibly dimmed. "Honestly Brigid, when they asked me to deliver that message I asked how it was different from the past two decades of your life." Brigid laughed at that.

"You turned out all right," Brigid said, "I thought you would have ended up the trophy wife."

"I would have if it weren't for Sam," Rebecca said, "He swept me off my feet one day, onto his motorcycleâ€|.you know the story."

Brigid raised an eyebrow, "Motorcycle huh?"

"In his youth," Rebecca said, "We're a bit more responsible now."

"It's only been a few years," Brigid said, "When did you two get hitched?"

"We eloped about six months after your left," Rebecca said, "Hence the five children in six years."

"Bow-chika-bow-wow," Brigid said.

"Shut-up," Rebecca said. Ja'naÃ§so spoke in hushed voices with someone at the door and then tapped Brigid on the shoulder.

"Please forgive my intrusion," Ja'naÃ§so said. "But you have an alpha-priority call waiting for you."

"Oh," Brigid said, "Excuse me." She stood and told Rebecca to make herself at home. She walked over to the panel and accessed the call directly. "McClain here, what is it?"

"Admiral," Covesash said, "I was informed of your incident from Major Pasada, and I have contacted UNSC. They are to make a formal apology

to you tomorrow, if they do not please get out of there as soon as possible."

"I will," Brigid said.

"Also," Covesash said, "We have an important mission for you. We need you to leak information of Earth's location to the Covenant and then plant a tracer on High Chairty."

"It would mean betraying the humans," Brigid said, "They could be monitoring this call."

"Not with me on it," Killjoy said, "And besides, from what Firefly tells me the Covenant are getting closer. She can plant the subsequences to defend Earth now."

"They aren't getting closer, they know where Earth is, our only hope is to plant false intel," Firefly said, "Make a new home-planet for Humans, and make Earth look like just another base. They found coordinates telling the location of our solar system on a couple different planets, but I don't have any proof because the humans don't think that an AI can be smart enough to hack the Covenant Battle network from my current position. So my plan is to make this world look like another piece of the puzzle."

"But if they guess it they won't have another base to fall back to," Brigid said.

"Ok, I'm not talking about a Reach size here," Firefly said, "I'm talking about a very small base, Ku-Lita sized if that, besides, they would have to leave part of the planet intact to find the coordinates."

"Should I run it by a human officer?" Brigid asked.

"No," Covesash said, "Let them believe it an accident. We are at a pivotal point in history. The scales between the Covenant and the Human's are balanced. Our actions will decide in which way they will tip."

"It is difficult," Brigid said, "We cannot make an easy or informed decision."

"The time for caution is over," Covesash said, "Lure the Prophet of Regret out of High Charity and plant a tracer in his quarters. We will be able to attack them within the year. Our spies tell us that the Brutes are become more lustful for power and usurping their Sanghelli commanders. If we can tip the scales then it does not matter if the humans are with us, we will have a common enemy between all the races of the Resistance. The humans will join us because they cannot fight on their own."

"All right," Brigid said, "I will be off this planet in two days and make all speed for High Charity, do we have coordinates?"

"Here is the link," Covesash said, "Use it as little as possible, we can't have our spy compromised."

"I understand," Brigid said. She cut the feed and returned to her sister. "Sorry about that."

"I hear that you are planning to buy a moon-side home," Rebecca said, sitting with Ja'naÃ§o. "Sam is a realtor on the moon, just let me know who you want one for and Ill make sure you get a deal."

"It's for the Carias family," Brigid said, "I want to be able to visit them more often."

"OK," Rebecca said, "I think you need a small town for them." The three laughed. "Ill talk to Sam and see if we can get a private compound."

"Thank you," Brigid said, "But I have to go to the command bridge for a few moment, would you care to join us?" Rebecca nodded.

"General," Ja'naÃ§o said, "Forgive me." He turned to the AI. "Killjoy, initiate a scan and fire an EMP."

"Ja'naÃ§o!" Brigid said, "Unnecessary." A flash went over Rebecca's body and she yelped as a static charge moved over her skin. "Overprotective baka." Brigid mumbled under her breath.

"What was that?" Rebecca asked.

"It made sure that you weren't bugged," Brigid said, "Ja'naÃ§o is overprotective."

"No listening devices detected," Killjoy said, appearing on the ground, "However, she has very good memory, I would suggest a partial scan before she departs."

Brigid opened her mouth to protest, but Rebecca beat her to it. "No, it's all right, I understand." Brigid sighed, but Rebecca smiled. "I understand how classified information works, and I know that you can't just let me walk out with the layout of your ship."

"Thanks," Brigid said. "I'm afraid that the war is going like your own, engagements are becoming harder and the Covenant have stopped trying to save planets."

"I work as a code breaker for ONI," Rebecca said, "I know the real casualty lists and the results of battle."

"Does Sam know?" Brigid asked. Rebecca nodded.

"He knows," she said as they entered the bridge, "But I'm very deep cover and I'm not allowed to really talk about it with anyone. You're leaving soon and we haven't seen each other in years, so I'm going to call you an exception to the rule." Brigid entered the bridge of the Revenge and the crew acknowledged her presence. "You guys don't put a lot of focus on pomp and circumstance, do you?"

"Nope," Brigid said, Pasada walked up.

"Admiral, the bridge is yours."

"Thank you Major," Brigid said, "Do we have any external fighters?" The negative acknowledgement came back on her screen. "Order the three cruisers to turn about and set a course for their moon. Designate a rally point and landing zone away from the human

settlement and prepare the skiffs for tomorrow." The green light came on as acknowledged and the ship began to swing around away from the blue oceans of the Earth and the white glow of the moon. They landed about a klick away from the meeting point and the crew prepped the skiffs that could skim the lunar surface to the colony. Rebecca left soon afterwards because she had to get back and put the children to bed. Brigid waited on her ship for the crew to return. She knew that Kyle was staying to assist ONI, and Jo would never leave the Resistance, but the jury was out on Brian and Sage.

"Admiral," a voice sounded over the intercom, she acknowledged the communication with a press of the button, "There are three shuttles on approach, they are due in their respective docking bays in two minutes. Brian and Jo are coming to the Revenge."

"Thank you," Brigid said, smiling, "I will meet them there."

"Brain sends a message," then voice continued, "He asks to transport several large barrels into our cargo hold along with a dozen boxes he cannot fit on either of the two ships."

"Granted," Brigid said, "I'm on my way." She sighed and stood up, straightening her tunic and sash as she walked out of the doors. She walked quickly to the cargo bay and paused at the entrance, feeling very old.

"Hey," Jo called, "Brian's decided to stay and, he brought beer."

"Beer?" Brigid asked. Sure enough, the barrels were kegs and the boxes were full of grain seed, probably to cultivate on Ithil. He already had the keg opened and was pouring the clear gold liquid into red plastic frat party cups. "How the hell did you get that past the customs on Earth?"

"Misdirection," Brian said, handing her a cup, "Drink up, I've got hundreds of these." Brigid smiled and clanked the cup against her two friends, drinking the gold liquid deeply. She was buzzed after only that one cup, she had forgotten how to drink.

"Dear God that's good," Jo said, draining the cup in one try. "Woah, it's been a while."

"Yes it has," Brian said, "Faaaaarrrrrr to long."

"I'm assuming that these are to grow on Ithil so we can start a brewery?" Brigid asked.

"Naturally," Jo said, "Hey Ja'na'ño? Want a beer?"

"What?" Ja'na'ño asked. Brigid poured him a full glass.

"Beer," Brigid said, "It's human alcohol. Be careful, it's much more powerful than your stuff." Ja'na'ño sniffed the drink and took a gulp. He smiled.

"This is good," he said, taking another sip. He smiled wider. "This is really good." He drained the cup. "Do you have more of this?" Brigid looked at the barrels.

"I think we have a few," she said. Ja'naÃ§so smiled and picked up one of the medium sized kegs, punctured a hole in it with his shield, and took a deep draught from it. The three humans stood there and stared as the hunter quickly drank the keg and smiled. "Anyway, we have a new mission once we get out of here, so lets wrap up these negotiations and get the hell out of here."

"I have one question," Ja'naÃ§so said as he crunched the keg in his fist. His friends looked at him. "Why the fuck were we ever fighting you guys? Can I have more?" They gave him another keg and others walked up. Oska tried a cup and got pleasantly toasted off the alcohol, they cut him off after only one refill, they didn't need a drunk navigator. Brigid sent him to the galley to get some food and then sleep off the alcohol. A Grunt walked up.

"Excuse me ma'am," he said, "Sergeant Takta, what is that?"

"Here," Jo said, "Try it." She handed the grunt a drink and he drain the cup.

"That's good," Takta said, "Hey guys, try this." The Grunt called over three of his friends, and each of them drained a keg. Jo found it very amusing that grunts could out drink Sanghelli and turned in soon herself, pleasantly tipsy. Word traveled fast and Brigid had to order a few more kegs from the other ship and then stowed it for the rest of negotiations. She turned in that night with a smile, they aliens and humans had found something that they both enjoyed.

The rest of the quiet negotiations past quickly. ONI spooks had worked hard to keep the Resistance ambassadors under wraps, and had so far succeeded in keeping their existence secret. A few tabloid papers claimed to have Covenant sightings, but no one trusted them except a few 30 year old guys living in their mothers basements because they were to pathetic to move out. Brigid informed Sarge and Kyle of their plan, as they were still members of the Resistance, purchased a house on the moon for the Carias family, and left Earth behind her jet stream.

Two days later Brigid walked onto the bridge and stood over Oska's shoulder. "Have we contacted the spy?" She asked. Oska nodded, "He's transmitting the coordinates now." Brigid stood straight and nodded, "Alert me when we are within range." Oska sounded the affirmative and Brigid adjusted her helmet, glad to be back in combat wear. She turned back and sat in the command chair, fingering the pad that linked her to Jo and Brian, the other two commanders came up on her screen.

"Admiral," Jo said, "We are ready to receive the coordinates for slipstream entrance."

"Sending now," Brigid said, "Brian, do you have a team selected?"

Brian nodded, "NÃ|la is leading a small task force of servants aboard High Charity and Oren is leading the inersion team that will plant the tracer."

"Well done," Brigid said, "Brian, while you complete your mission Jo and I will land on the planet's surface and create a diversion to draw out some of their forces. Have you prepared the chip?"

"Yes," Brian said, "It portrays Earth as a small outlying system that makes Ku-Lita look like New York, I've also pointed out rumors of a human home world three galaxies over."

"What happens if they go for the home world?" Jo asked, "Looking for the knock-out."

"I've made Earth look small, but an important piece with final coordinate," Brian explained, "They will go for it, but its enough out of the way that they don't need to worry about an armada coming down on the stations. They'll send a strike team down for it to avoid any unnecessary losses."

"Killjoy," Brigid said, "Do we have the secure link?"

"Yes," Firefly replied, Waterwalker standing next her on the screen as three more appeared, "No one can eavesdrop."

"Kyle, Sarge," Brigid said, "Any trouble from your end?"

"No," Kyle said, "I've already figured out UNSC network and I can send secret orders to have troops on training in cities and other areas that the covenant are most likely to land. Brian, put in coordinates for New Mombasa, that will be the easiest base to access and send troops to for urban warfare training."

"All right," Brian said, "I'll have those corrections made immediately." A tech appeared on Brian's screen and took the stick.

"Sarge," Brigid said, "have you calculated the time it would take the Covenant to reach you?"

"About two weeks," Sarge said, "Plenty of time. I'll be off-planet at the time, but I'm working now to have more troops study urban warfare. My argument is that we should be launching capture pods and fighting the ships via green-power (hoo-rah) and winning that way to avoid glassing any more planets."

"OK, I think that's all we have to cover. Ill call you when the mission is complete." Brigid said, exhaling and cutting the feed, "Ready you're crews for slipstream jump. Oska, where are we."

"Waiting for your order ma'am," he replied, his hand waiting over the execute command switch. Brigid nodded and felt the ship lurch as they accelerated into slipstream. Firefly and her human friends disappeared from the call screen and she let the standby crew take over for the slipstream flight, she would need her combat crew rested and ready when the time came. She went back to her quarters and found two messages waiting in her personal file.

"It's the Carias's," Ja'naÃ§o said, "I told tem to leave a message because you were in a meeting." Brigid nodded her thanks and plugged the cable into the new connections on her artificial arm. The first image came up on the screen, it was most of the family.

"Hi Brigid!" They all yelled, "We're sorry you had to leave in such a hurry," Jess called, "You have to come back soon."

"Just let us know when you're in the neighborhood," Chris said, "And thank you for the summer home and Shuttle. Michael's already sent us pictures and they're beautiful." The rest of the message went about the same, begging her to come back and visit. The children wanted Ja'naÃ§o to come and she forwarded that part fo the message to his pad. Ja'naÃ§o opened it a minute later and was laughing as the children showed him drawings they had made of him, even if they couldn't show anyone or tell their friends about him. She closed the message and saved it before opening the second, Michael's face appeared on the screen.

"Hey girl," he said, "Hope I don't seem stalkerish calling you so soon, but I'm missing you again. I have to say, it's easier now that you've left your number. I just wanted to show you the house you bought us since you probably didn't even look at it." The camera shifted and showed a beautiful glass des looking out over the Sea of Tranquility. "Peaceful isn't it, Dad already named this is Zen room. Any-who, sorry to keep this short but I've got to go lock up, it's late here and we're about to close down the shades. I'll send another post soon. Later!" Brigid smiled and reached an armored hand to her throat, still wearing the chain with his ring.

"What time is it?" Brigid asked.

"It's about 1735," Ja'naÃ§o said, "Our ETA to the appointed coordinates is 0220."

"I'm going to catch some shut-eye," Brigid said, "Can you wake me up at 0110?"

"Sure," Ja'naÃ§o said. She closed her eyes and slept deeply, worried about the mission ahead. She and Jo would be facing a lot, and they would either have to force the Covenant forces to ground or launch transports and board them. She sent a message to Jo for a tactical meeting at 0120 and shifted in her armor. She rarely removed the plates anymore, it felt to much like a second skin that she felt naked without it. Besides, the day she came back she had replaced her bionic arm with an armored one that blended into her suit. She had also put in several more slots for data cards, she could now carry three AI's without overloading her suit, though only one would be active, and a couple million gigabytes of information. She flexed the hand and smiled, it moved better than her hastily built prosthetic anyway. She rubbed the joint of her left elbow and leaned her head back in her wall, letting sleep claim her again.

It seemed a moment later that Ja'naÃ§o was tapping her faceplate. "Wake up," he said, "It's 0110 and you have need to get ready for your meeting." Brigid grumbled and waved Ja'naÃ§o away. "Don't make me pour water down your back plateâ€|" Brigid was up.

"I'm ready," She said, "And that is evil."

"It's my job," Ja'naÃ§o said, "Lets go, I want to see where we are." They walked up to the command bridge and addressed Oska.

"Assuming my calculations are correctâ€|We're passing the Mygeeto system now," Oska said, "We should arrive on schedule."

"Good," Brigid said, she sat back in her chair and was hailed by Jo.

"I'm here, what to you have?"

"Well," Jo said, "If we go right out and face a Covenant armada we know that we're fucked. So I have a plan."

"Shoot," Brigid said, "I talked with Kyle and we came up with a place to hide our ships while more of our crew goes out and sets the trap."

"What's the bait?"

"It's rather a good plan, if Kyle doesn't say so himself," Jo said, "We set up a camp and wait for the Covenant to start bombarding us. Your crew remains in orbit because the Covenant know to look for you. While the Covenant chase you and I we leave Pasada in tactical command of our ships. Once the drop ships are safely on the ground and have unloaded their troops he will engage what ships he can and send over transports to take control of a cruiser. Once that happens they should call for backup and more troops will come from High Charity." Brigid's eyes flashed over the plans as they flashed over the split screen. "Then the ground team bugs out and disappears into these underground caverns. Then the ships will start making jumps to confuse the Covenant, by then our team will have planted the bug and gotten off High Charity in time."

"Sounds good," Brigid said, "But what is Nã|la and her spies have trouble getting through security and Oren has trouble accessing the database."

"Paka is our best," Jo said, "And he grew up in High Charity, he knows it better than any of us."

"OK," Brigid said, "It's all we've got, sounds like a good plan. Who are you taking planetside?"

"Most of the Shock Troopers are coming with me for the hard part," Jo said, "The rest of my troops are going on the transports except for all essential personnel and a strike team to take control of the cruiser bridge."

"All right," Brigid said, "So I'll keep my command crew here and send my Shock troopers over with the transport crews and take a few with me onto the planet. Upload this plan to Brian and let him know what we're doing."

"Sure thing," Jo said, signing off. Brigid smiled and readjusted her glove on her right hand. "Oska, what's our ETA?"

"15 minutes," Oska said, "Do you wish me to signal ready stations?"

"Thank you," Brigid said, "Tell Ja'naãso, Juano, Okanda, Takta, Nadai, ãton, O'nakasha, Te'Sunaa, and Manera to meet me at transport five, we're going planetside once we exit slipstream. They are to bring supplies for a week. Shock Troopers to the other transports, they're going to join up with Jo's troops. Inform Pasada that he has tactical control of the space battle."

"Getting done," Oska said, typing furiously. "Good luck ma'am, I'll see you when you get back."

Brigid entered the elevator and raised two fingers in a cocky salute, the Resistance's informal way of saying 'see you later.' She smiled as the doors began to woosh shut. "Give them hell Oska." An acknowledgement light winked on her HUD as she descended to the bay and her waiting team. She made quick accessories from the assembled weaponry and they loaded everyone onto a drop ship, leaving large footprints in a message telling her ship to leave her on the planet while they guarded a captured Covenant relic.

"Killjoy," Brigid said as they set up the camp, "Did you go over Brian's chip?"

"Yes," Killjoy said as Brigid held the center post for a shield tent. "I put in a quick translator program to make Earth look like the next step, not the home world, I even marked it as uninhabited. That way it should screw with all their current translations. Something to shake the Prophets confidence."

"Excellent," Brigid said, looking up as the first Covenant cruisers began to arrive. "Killjoy, send the signal. It's party time." Killjoy smiled and sent the 'party time' signal through their armor, it was their personal code for: 'the shit's about to hit the fan, get ready!' The camp became a scramble of action. Different people manned turrets and Brigid's personal guard got ready. The cruisers remained in high orbit and the dropships began to fall, Brigid smiled. The plan was working perfectly, the Prophets wanted her alive and the artifact unharmed. Their greed would help their victory. Brigid turned to her communications non-com. "Send the signal to Brian as soon as their drop ships land that the guests have arrived and we're opening our champagne." The non-com nodded and quickly set up the long range communications gear in a secure location.

The group waited until the drop ship was right overhead and then unloaded with plasma cannons, fuel rod cannons, and all other heavy weaponry they had brought. Jo and her hunter team took out a drop ship on their own. Brigid aimed her cannon at the turret of one ship and managed to take it out so that they were being dropped without the benefit of air support.

"Banshees and Phantoms inbound on our position," Killjoy said.

"Open the confetti cannons," Brigid said on the team-wide com channel. All troops abandoned the shades and hooked it up to the wire, the last grunt jumped out and hooked up the large cable without assistance, Brigid made a mental note to commend the warrior.

"Cannons set," the grunt replied, "Ready when you are."

"How's our hacking status?" Brigid asked Killjoy privately as the AI took over the turrets and sent a crisscross of fire to take down the incoming ships.

"They're monitoring all of team-wide chatter," Killjoy said, "But they're pretty confused with your party analogies."

"Thought so," Brigid said, "If we keep the themes going they shouldn't be able to break it, right?"

"It's a language not a code," Killjoy said, "So its highly unlikely that they should."

"Ok," Brigid said, "How are ground forces on their side?"

"They've set up a rally point here," Killjoy said, setting a navpoint about a klick away. "They're going to drop off their troops there and try and take us through force."

"Good," Brigid said, "Encode that and send it out over the channel."

"Message from Pasada," her communications officer said, "He says he's waiting till the music starts to open his champagne." Brigid nodded.

"Tell everyone to take defensive positions," she ordered, "We're gonna have some company coming over that hill in about two minutes. Jo, you and your brothers go into the forest and lure them here, don't kill them all, we need their troops to start landing here before Pasada can go."

"Darn it," Jo said, "I wanted a high kill count."

Brigid reviewed her HUD and saw what was coming, "You will, see if you can snag a Scorpion." Brigid saw Jo's acknowledgement light wink on and knew that she was scouting ahead already.

"They're really packing it in heavy," Jo said, "Better get something heavy back in return."

"Like we need it," Brigid said, "Are you in need of backup?"

"Like hell," Jo said, "Backup means less for me. See you in a few minutes. Openâ€|" The channel cut off before Jo finished the command. Brigid slammed a new rack of bolts into her cannon and hefted it to her shoulder easily in her armor.

"OK everyone," she said over the com channel, "Load and aim, they're coming up on our position. Don't forget our real objective." Brigid meant to remind her troops that they were the distraction, and not to waste their lives, but the Covenant would see it as protecting the "artifact" from capture. She smiled and waited, her crosshairs centered on the trees in front of her. The next moment a few Hunters charged out of the forest, back first and firing into the trees. They were followed by a Scorpian tank, also charging backwards with the Rebel sign on its back so that they wouldn't shoot Jo by mistake.

"Tank's ours," one of the front-line Sanghelli sounded off anyway. Acknowledgement lights blinked on Brigid's HUD by unit as each person signed in and took the Tank off the Enemy/Friendly markers on the motion trackers.

"Jo," Brigid said, "Back that ass to the right and protect our flank. Hunters, protect the left, cannons in the middle. Ghosts up on the hill and fire downward, careful of the other Scorpions." Brigid slung her cannon and sprinted foreword. "And don't fire on the lead tank, that one's mine."

"Brigid," Ja'naÃ§o called as she vaulted over the foxhole, "Baka, get back here! Idiot, please don't shoot the Admiral as she tries to commit suicide." The entire unit chuckled and Jo began to lob plasma into the woods to clear a path for Brigid and confuse their lines. Brigid charged towards the forest and came face-to-face with a Scorpion tank, which charged to run her over. Brigid smiled and jumped onto the top of the tank as it swerved, trying to shake her off, she reached down into the cockpit of the tank and broke the Sanghelli's neck that had been driving the tank. She ripped the corpse out and jumped into the ill-formed seat to drive the tank. She spun it around and slammed the vehicle into reverse, firing her cannon as she did. She quickly returned the tank to their lines and turned it over to a Sanghelli standing nearby so that she could command, Jo had also done the same.

The two climbed up on top of a ridge for a moment and watched the battle rage below them, the Resistance were fighting like there was no tomorrow, and she saw only Covenant bodies littering the ground. The Resistance had already taken most of their tanks, and with Killjoy in control of the shades air support was impossible. A moment later a group of Covenant burst through the trees behind the command structure and tried to take them out. Brigid drew her plasma sword and a rifle, waiting for the group to get closer. She smiled and activated the plasma sword, slamming it into the chest of the Brute that attacked her, she continued on and smacked a jackel's shield out of the way with her pistol, kicking his face in with one blow. She continued her tornado of death until she got to the edge of the circle, then she turned and looked inward as Ja'naÃ§o stood next to her, watching the carnage.

"They look good," Ja'naÃ§o said, "Should we joinâ€|."

"Ja'naÃ§o?" Brigid asked, he pointed with his shield as Jo came over and stood next to them for a moment. Brigid's jaw dropped.

"What are you guys gaping at?" Jo asked. Brigid took Jo's jaw and turned her helmet and the second woman's jaw dropped as well. None of them could believe what they were seeing.

There was a grunt moving across the battlefield, a trail of bodies in his wake. Ja'naÃ§o finally found his voice, "What the fuckâ€|." The grunt looked over a toppled Covenant container at a few Brutes crouched in defensive position. He turned back down and took something off of a fallen Sangheli and turned back to the group of Brutes. He threw a plasma grenade at one of them and it stuck to his face without trouble, once it detonated the grunt jumped on top of the fallen pod and jumped onto the nearest surviving Brute. He set something in its chest and activated it; a plasma sword appeared in the Brute and killed him instantly. The grunt used the momentum from the falling Brute to jump onto the next one and kick him, breaking his neck in a moment. The grunt then drew a Brute Shot off one of the corpses and fired on the three remaining Brutes, two of them fell and the last went berserk. The grunt jumped again and brought the weapons blade down on the Brutes head, caving the skull in as blood seeped around him.

"Who is that?" Brigid asked, pointed. No one answered except for Ja'naÃ§o shaking his head. "Is he under my command â€" why isn't he undâ€|..get him under my command! Like, right now!" Ja'naÃ§o went and spoke to the grunt, but another wave of Covenant forces came before

Brigid had the chance to speak to the warrior. Brigid and the group held their ground as the Covenant kept coming, but soon the drop ships stopped coming.

"We have a message from Pasada," Jo said, "He's engaged the Covenant in the space battle and crashed their communications, we'll have a prize soon."

"Brigid," Ja'naÃ§o said, "We have the signal from Brian, he and NÃ|la have planted the chip, they're on their way home."

"Send out the retreat," Brigid said, "Tell everyone to fall back to the tunnels and stay down. The larger force won't be long behind, make sure that grunt is brought to my office." Ja'naÃ§o nodded and the Resistance forces slowly trickled away into the eves of the forest and then the shelter of the mountain. Brigid walked into a tunnel and kept walking as Ja'naÃ§o followed her into the base they had hollowed out the night before, some of the walls still has scorch marks from the plasma tunneling. Brigid walked into a large underground cavern and found her troops waiting in formation at parade rest.

"They beat us all here," Ja'naÃ§o said, "I don't see anyone missing."

"Get accountability and dismiss your troops," Brigid said, "No one can leave the mountain for 24 units, we'll have the normal rotation on scout detail. Dismissed." Brigid walked back to the corner of the cavern that had been set up as HQ and sat down, Ja'naÃ§o was speaking with the communication's officer when a grunt approached her.

"General Admiral," he said, saluting. Brigid had removed her helmet and returned the salute, "Sergeant Yap-Tak, reporting as ordered."

"Sergeant Yap-Tak," she replied, leaning back, "I saw you fight today, you fought quite well."

"Thank you ma'am," he replied, he looked very nervous.

"You are one of our Covenant recruits, are you not?"

"Yes ma'am, you're forces liberated me from a prison on one of their raids," Yap-Tak said, "They were going to execute me for heresy. I have wanted to thank you for some time."

"I am sorry to bring up old memories," Brigid said, "But I understand that they destroyed your family before yourself, a spouse and several younglings."

"Yes," Yap-Tak said, his hands shook. "They did."

"I am sorry for your loss," Brigid said, "Now, a question to today's actions, why have you not been appointed for promotion?"

"Ma'am?"

"You've been with us for four years," Brigid said, "And you are only

a sergeant."

"I am not understanding you ma'am," Yap-Tak said.

"In short," Brigid said, saving the file she had been looking at, "Your platoon leader has told me that you've led your squad quite well, and you have the highest kill count in your company. Am I mistaken in any of these facts?" Yap-Tak made no comment. "Very well then, I am giving you a field promotion to the rank of Captain and giving you an elite squad under Colonel Brian Hetington. You are to report to him as soon as we get back, until then you are under my personal command. Do you have any objections to this recommendation?" Yap-Tak looked like he was ready to fall over from the shock.

"No ma'am," he stammered, "Thank you ma'am." He saluted and Brigid went back to her paperwork. Twenty minutes later Yap-Tak returned. "Ma'am, we have received word from Colonel Hetington, his mission was a success and he is on his way back."

"Casualty report," Brigid said.

"Unknown on the enemy side, they're still counting," Yap-Tak said, "We have about three hundred and twenty two Covenant Forces either captured or missing. No Resistance forces reported dead so far." Brigid dropped her pen.

"No major injuries or deaths reported?" She asked.

"None," Yap-Tak replied, "It appears the victory was complete. I congratulate you Admiral."

Brigid leaned back in her chair, for the first time in a long time, she would not have to write any letters to families, informing them of the loss. "Send word to Ithil once we are sure of the tally, and send word to Major Pasada that we will rendezvous with him as soon as possible, and we will be waiting at the appointed coordinates." Yap-Tak saluted and walked over to the communications officer. Brigid smiled and ignored the data pad next to her for a few more minutes, words could not describe how proud she was of her troops. They had gone against incredible odds to complete a mission to save Earth, and they had won. She sighed.

"What's on your mind?" Jo asked.

"We've planted the data chip about Earth," Brigid said, "I just hope it's enough to tempt Regret out of High Charity without the rest of the fleet."

"It'll work," Jo said.

"If it doesn't," Brigid said, "I don't know what we're going to do."

"We'll have to keep on fighting," Jo said, "Just as we always have. You want the first watch cycle?" Brigid nodded. "I'll catch some shut-eye then. I'll talk to you after two units." Brigid nodded again and looked at the display pad, she began working on their next assignment. Knowing the Covenant, they would have a few tricks up their sleeves after their defeat at Earth. She ran a hand through her short hair, and after their fleet was defeated they would know the

location of the human home world.

"Dear God," Brigid said, "This is it."

Well " what do you think?

More is coming soon, I promise.

So, please Review. I like all feedback, good or bad.

****I thrive on reviews and they make me want to write more.****

****Tenna' ento lye omenta****

****(Until we next meet)****

****Vera****

11. Second Halo, A meeting

****I'm back!****

****You can run in terror now.****

****Sorry I haven't updated in a while - long story.****

****Authors Note: There are going to be several people who probably will hate this " but I'm lengthening one period of time in the original HALO 2 plot line, this comes just before the pelican drop with the warthog.****

****Also- don't ask me why I included the song lyrics (which aren't mine), it just worked out that way.****

****Vera****

****On with the fic everyone!****

"Admiral," the call came in over the intercom, "Admiral, wake up!" Two minutes the door opened and a Sanghelli stepped in. "Admiral, ma'am, wake up." Brigid opened her eyes and sat up, looking at the midshipman.

"What is it?" She asked, rubbing her eyes.

"There's a HALO," he said, turning on the light, "This one is surrounded by the Covenant fleet."

"Which Fleet?" Brigid asked.

"Just a smaller group of ships, not even a fleet." The male replied, giving her a tunic and trousers. "But the entire fleet is on its way, even High Charity." That woke Brigid up, she was walking onto the bridge less than two minutes later.

"Status?" Brigid asked.

"We're in geosync orbit on the dark side of the planet," Maika said,

"Covenant scans are focused towards the ring and I'm picking up a UNSC signal from one of their cruisers, In Amber Clad. From my data, it's commanded by Commander Miranda Keys, daughter of the late hero from HALO."

"Based on our current position," Oska said, "We can launch our dropships now and make it down to the ring without being noticed, as long as we keep a low profile on the network."

"Can't use the prophets as an excuse," Brigid said, "They're here to rebuke us. Ok, load up the troops, we're going down there. Essential personnal only to remain behind, have the transmitters ready if you guys have to bail and make sure you scramble the code on the dropships for friendly enemy trackers."

"Ma'am," Maika said, "Keying in orders to the engineers now."

"Oska," Brigid said, "Keep us in geosync orbit and low profile, with luck the Covenant will keep all their attention on the ring and not the other side of this giant. Work with Maika and see if you can do anything to mask our presence."

"Getting done," Oska said. "Ma'am, permission to accompany the regular troops on this mission."

"Denied," Brigid said, she stepped closer to the Sangheli. "Oska, I need you to stay here and remain in control of the two ships and wait for the third. When our group is complete you can land your dropships, ok?" Oska nodded and started to key in the several commands that would get the troops to where they needed to go. Brigid turned and went over her armor one more time, she knew that this battle would be different. Before their engagements had all been low profile, this one there would be battles where they would have to go in fighting. Brigid went to her dropship when all her weapons were strapped on and met Ja'naÃ§o there.

"Brigid," he said, "You ready for this one?"

"Yeah," Brigid said, "I've seen worse battles than what they may put me through here. I'm just worried, the only thing these guys have had close to real battle is what we went through right before the Earth mission. This one won't be like anything they've ever faced, they're to used to victory and not used enough to defeat. Our last victory was perfect, no casualties on our side, I'm worried that it got to their heads and chances are that not all of our banshees will even make it to the ground."

"The new Covenant policy is shoot first and ask questions later." Ja'naÃ§o said, "I received a message from a friend on High Chairity that they've been repressing the Sangheli, and the Brutes are gaining power in Covenant Society."

"Conflict helps," Brigid said, "It keeps our moral high and theirs low." They strapped into the dropship and Brigid took the pilots chair as they detached from the ship and formed up with Jo's dropships.

"Hey girl," Jo said, "Brian just looked at their stragedy, and it's a pretty good defensive grid they have around the rings. They're going

to tear us apart if we try and sneak past."

"We'll have to go in full throttle," Brian said, his image splitting the screen with Jo's, "Try and get as many dropships thorough as possible, there's no room for sneaking on this op."

"Ok," Brigid said, "We'll go in silent until the very last second, and then our engines at full throttle to get through. Can you get me a trajectory that will get us through in the least amount of time." Brigid switched to coded speech. "And I need to know what our losses will be."

"Here's your flight plan," Brian said, and also switched to their code. "And I really don't know, we could come through unscathed and we could loose half our ships." Brigid nodded.

"Any contact with the UNSC ship that crashed here?" Brigid asked.

"No," Jo replied, "We've been trying to open a chanel, but they're running dark." Brigid nodded.

"We're wasting time," she said, "Set your course plans and lets get moving, silent running from now on." Brigid flashed the keys that would command the troops in the back of the shaip to remain quiet and silence all communicators until further notice. Brigid tapped her vents and maneuvered her ship on the correct trajectory. They were moving slower than she would have liked, but they were within pinging distance of the Covenant fleet. One of the ships appeared on her viewscreen and she cursed silently in her helmet, the tension in thea lw3 ship was so thick you could cut it with a knife. They must not have been seen because the ship continued to move and scan the surface of the ring. Ja'naÃ§o opened a private channel under static cover to mask his words from scans.

"Tha's a scouting ship," he said, "They must have sent him ahead to asses the situation. We have to get down there now if we're going to be fo any help." While Brigid had been listening to Ja'naÃ§o a small shuttle going from one ship to the next noticed them and two Covenant cruisers prepped their guns.

"Brigid," Jo said, "They're priming!"

"Full burners!" Brigid yelled into the pilot intercom chanel, "Give it everything you've got and get to the surface! Now!" The tail end of every drop ship glowed like a firefly as their engines went from zero to full in mere seconds. What had been a slow ride turned into a sprint for survival as the Covenant weapons fired. Two dropships were insinarated and Brigid flinched, they had not even gotten down to the planet yet. The third cruiser that had passed them earlier was coming about and also preparing to fire. "Over-burn engines," Brigid commanded, "And just land the damn things, we'll find each other later, Admiral McClain out!" Brigid hit a key and music began to pour over the loudspeaker in every ship, the Resistance Battle song pumped through the hulls and alien voices sang through the song, Brigid only hoped it was eough to get them to the surface without focusing on their dead companions.

She turnedback to her controls and let the music guide her movements, her hands lighta s feathers on the delicate controls of the hybrid

dropships. She dodged incoming plasma fire and saw her engine warning light come on, she ignored it and turned the alarm off. Out of nowhere a scarab fighter group came and opened fire on the dropships. Ja'na'ño had already ordered the cannons manned and half the scarab force was depleted as nearly sixty dropships simultaneously opened their cannons on the group.

Jo pulled ahead and began to lead the descent into the rings atmosphere, still destroying scarabs on the way down. Brigid noticed a small cluster in front of her and knew that she could not easily blast through them. So she punched her underbelly thrusters and her port thrusters at the same time. The result was a gut-wrenching turn that barrel-rolled them over the group of fighters and destroyed three with combined fire from their cannons. The rest were destroyed with fire from the other ships and Brigid righted the ship after Jo's again. The atmosphere ride was rough and they were bumping against air pockets the whole way down. Brigid and Jo leveled out their ships, Ja'na'ño switched one of the view panels to their aft cameras so they could keep an eye on the rest of their crew.

Soon the room cooled from its heated entry and they found a place to land. Twenty Resistance dropships had managed to stay together, and Brigid could see that the others were not far away. She brought her commander's view up on her HUD and looked at what she had left, five dropships had been destroyed on the way down and six more were out of her scanners range. Brigid grit her jaw, she hoped the other ships were just on the other side of the ring instead of what she feared. Brigid engaged the security protocols and unhooked her harness.

"Hey," Killjoy said, "Guess what, I can't enter the network of this HALO."

"What?" Brigid asked, stunned.

"That other AI I met earlier is here," she said, "And I don't want her in my systems, looks like you're going to have to find your own maps on this one."

"Ok," Brigid said, she walked out into the snow and looked as it fell from the sky. "Where is the nearest Covenant force?"

"We're not even close to their dropzone," Killjoy said, "And I wouldn't suggest taking these birds up again, the Covenant have you flagged for destruction and we still haven't been able to get contact with the humans."

"Looks like we're legging it," Brigid said, "Jo, get your transports unlatched from the dropships, we're driving."

"Yes Ma'am," Jo said, it was not long before all the crew were aboard different vehicles. Hunters took the large, flatbed like, hover craft that could support them. Grunts were also stationed on those with large cannons. The rest of the group filled in stolen ghosts, old warthogs from Revenge, and shrieks. Brigid smirked as she manned the turret on a warthog, Jo was driving and Brian was in the passenger seat with a cannon over his shoulder. They were a ragtag group. Brigid raised her hand and waved it forward.

The group powered their engines and started moving in their normal,

fast moving formation. Shrikes and ghosts circles the group as warthogs and flatbeds served as heavy support, three ghosts were scouting ahead for enemy troops in the snow and they began to drive towards the beaches and battle. The group was silent the entire three hour trip, a few people had some cadences going, but none of them took for long. Brigid's helmet dipped slightly, no one was talking because they were all thinking about what was going to happen. Brigid knew that contact between the Covenant and the Resistance had grown, family members were contacting each other and the groups were growing closer. Everyone there knew that it was only a matter of time before the larger splits started to happen. The snow gently gave way to a temperate climate and the sun shined down over the group.

"Banshee's, 6 o'clock high!" someone called, "Flying away from us, it's a scout."

"Jam his transmissions," Brian said, "Open fire, shoot him down."

"To late," Maika said, "He has a report of enemy troops at our location, they don't know how many and are sending a retaliation force of three phantoms with two squads of banshees." The one scout banshee fell to the ground.

"Lock and load!" Brigid called out, "Here they come." She thought a moment as the force cleared the mountain and the banshees accelerated towards them. She selected something on her arm and music began to pound over the suit intercom, it was the song that all the Valkyries swore by.

_No one else _

Will help us to get through

_So by ourselves _

We'll know just what to do

_We are connected, _

We'll never be alone

_We walk together, _

Forever down that road

Several people began to sing along with the song, and it helped the group grow in confidence. She saw one grunt who had never shown anything close to confidence jump foreword on a flatbed and fire his cannon towards an approaching banshee, the shot was dead on and took out the pilot, the ship spiraled out of control and crashed into a phantom, wounding the craft in the process. Brigid smiled and aimed her rail gun at the wounded phantom.

_You and I _

Will share all that we know

_So close your eyes _

And just let yourself go

_We are connected, _

We'll never be alone

_We walk together, _

Forever down that road

"Cannons, focus fire on the banshees," Brigid ordered, "Everyone else, focus on the phantoms turrets and then the ships themselves." Cheers echoed over the song as each machine hit the ground, smoke turned the sky black and surely sent out a signal to anyone with eyes.

_And if you fall behind, _

and don't know what to do

I promise I'll be waiting there for you...

"They know we're here," Jo said, "What do you say we let them know a little faster." Brigid smiled.

"Activate overdrives!" She said, shouting over the roar of the engines, "Let's get to those beaches." Brigid's warthog kicked into overdrive and she hung onto the turret in order to keep from flying off the platform. Jo took the lead of the formation as the ghosts switched over to their boost engines and then surged ahead.

Follow me into a better day

_We'll be alright, _

no matter what they say

_We are connected, _

We'll never be alone

_We walk together, _

Forever down that road

They reached the beaches of HALO and saw a pelican crashed in the sand, several marines trying to hold off a wave of Covenant forces.

"Marine Unit," Brian shouted into the radio, "These are the Valkyries, the cavalry has arrived, please duck and cover."

"Ghosts, circle around and flank them," Brigid ordered, "Warthogs, branch out and give the cannons a clear shot at that tank." It didn't take long for the two tanks to be destroyed and the rest of the Covenant wiped out. Brigid got off her warthog and walked up to the stunned and shaken marines. "Sergeant, who is in charge here."

"Lieutenant's wounded," he said, shakey, "I guess I am." Brigid nodded.

"Medic's, disperses and do what you can," Jo said, "Admiral, permission to place a flatbed with the medics to take care of the wounded, both human and Resistance."

"Ma'am," Pasada said over the radio, "Brian's ship has arrived and I'm sending down the command crew for the ground."

"Perfect timing," Brigid said, "Here's our coordinates, we'll be there in an hour and a half. Have the team there about ten minutes after that to set up a rapid removal base, we'll have to evac quickly if they figure out how to activate this before we stop them."

"Acknowledged," Pasada said, "That gives us enough time to rest the other crew, they worked through two standard days to get here."

"Hoo-rah," Brian said. "That's my crew, extra beer when we're done with this mission."

"Speaking of which," Brigid said as they continued the trawl, "What about his beach head, we're going to need a supply drop."

"You've got some troops that you'll have to take on in a ground battle without the cannons because of the unstable rock formations surrounding the beach," Maika said, "The good news is that the Covenant can't use cannons either."

"What about grenades?" Jo asked.

"Those are fine," Maika said, "I'll set the robot drop to land your supplies about a klick away, you can pick them up on your way there."

"You rock," Brigid said.

"You know it," Maika said. She signed off the radio and the Marine in the passenger seat looked very confused.

"So?" he said, "Why are you riding with the Covenant?"

"Because they're not the Covenant," Brigid said, "They're the Resistance to the Covenant, you can tell 'cause we're the ones in green."

"Much like you're marine force," Ja'na'ño said, driving up next to them, "Brigid, we're going to have to ditch this machinery before we get to the beachhead and the best place to set up HQ. Chances are we're going to be seen, where are we going to leave this stuff."

"Under the camo nets," Brigid replied, "They're ready, and we'll leave a few guards. We should keep the marines with us until we can return them to UNSC."

"Agreed," Jo said, engaging the hand break and drifting around a curve in the beach. "In the meantime, I think that's our drop."

Brigid looked up and saw the streak of jets across the sky, heading for a position close to the horizon. Brigid raised a hand to her helmet and zoomed in on the object, it had the Resistance emblem on the hull.

"That's it," Brigid said, "Looks like she gave us some goodies."

"Cool," Jo said, "Ja'naÃ§o, take two flatbeds and pick up the supplies, meet us 500 meters away from the HQ sights and we'll ride up."

"Rolling thunder?" Ja'naÃ§o asked as he signaled out two flatbeds and headed for the drop point.

"Probably," Brigid replied. "Do you have a better idea?"

"Nope," Ja'naÃ§o said, "See you 500 from start." Brigid winked her acknowledgement light on her HUD and flexed her hand, scanning the sky for any other Covenant forces. They got to the rendezvous first and waited for Ja'naÃ§o to arrive as they went over the plan

"OK," Brigid said, making a quick map in the sand, "Jo, take the vehicles and prepare their hiding place, meet me back here when you're done."

"We have the supplies," Ja'naÃ§o said, "Everything is in place."

"Good," Brigid said, "Marines, I'm going to ask you guys to stay back here at command and help our forces coordinate." The marines looked at her and the sergeant started to speak up, Brigid raised an armored hand. "I know you want a piece of the Covenant as much as we do, but you guys are not part of my forces and I don't want any mix-ups once we get you back to UNSC command. Don't worry, my staff will be helping you."

"It's not that much of a battle," Brian said, "I'd say two platoon waves, and I opened the supplies, we have some recreation material for the off guys."

"Not the second wave," Brigid said, "I don't want them going in like that, we can have some once the first wave comes back and we have HQ set up."

"We ready?" Jo asked, also returning, "Vehicles are stowed and guards posted in active camouflage. You'd only find them if you ran into them."

"Good," Brigid said, kicking out the map, "Staff, set up a quick CP here and pick your marines. Valkyries, fall in!" A quick formation was assembled before her in combined teams of grunts, Sanghelli, and Hunters. Brigid smiled, the one weakness of the Covenant was that they never fought together, the Valkyries would die for each other. Yap-Tak stood in front of his elite squad, ready to kick ass and take names. Brigid surreptitiously lowered a fist and he pounded it as she went by, Brian smiled and also pounded with his friend, taking in place in front of his unit. "Ok everyone, you know your jobs, two standard waves, move!" They converged into their two separate waves and stood at rest, waiting for their scouts to get back. They did not

have to wait long until the three scouts returned with memorized plans of the Covenant force below.

"Standard phantom strike team," Lonahsha said, adjusting her drawing of the emplacements below. "Grunts lined up, two shades, a squad of jackals on sniper detail, a Brute team, and a squad of Sanghelli. Most of them are veteran rank and a few have zealot armor, looks like a Prophet was on one of the carriers."

"They have their shades planted against the cliff wall for cover," Mā|nga said, also adding his own observations to the picture. "We can send in a team to take them out from here." He drew a quick arrow in the dirt. "Then they can take charge and launch an attack against the forces themselves."

"Most of the action is around this Brute here," Paita added. "He seems to be high up in their society, I heard the name Atarus over my speaker, it is close to Tarturus and could be a relation to the Brute Chieftain."

"That makes him a payday for our troops," Brian said, "Where are the snipers?"

"Two are here on the cliff," Paita said, "And the others are among the boulders near the Brute Captain, and he has a Brute shot."

"Lovely," Jo said.

"Brian," Brigid continued, "Do you think Yap-Tak is ready to test his squad to take out that captain."

"Give him sniper support and they're be commander-less in a minute," Brian replied, "I never thought that they'd work so hard for a grunt, but he's got the best team here."

"Perfect," Brigid said, "Have our snipers deploy on either side of the bowl and among these rocks, take out the cliff snipers and shade operators to ease our passage. Everyone else, deploy here, here, and here." She drew arrows wrote the unit distinction next to them. "We'll have this wrapped up in ten minutes tops."

"Sounds good," Jo said, stamping out the plan as Brigid stood.

"Lock and load," Brigid said, "Our signal is when the snipers see everyone is in place and begin firing. Second wave will come in three minutes after first round, first wave will withdraw thirty time units after that, we'll wrap up the battle in six minutes. Any questions?" There were none. "Take charge of your units and kick Covenant ass."

"Yes Ma'am," her commanders replied and went back to their formations. Brigid took her place at the head of her wave and smiled back at Jo, who would lead the second. Brigid zoomed in on her HUD and kept an eye on Brian's progress, waiting for the signal that would start the battle. On the bottom left hand of her HUD she saw a 3:30 minutes timer waiting to count down. She saw Brian level his sniper rifle and removed the zoom on her HUD. The off units were busy setting up behind her and working on security for the HQ center they were setting up, mainly having to tear it down and retract all their

forces, and any other forces they could find, should the HALO begin to activate.

Brigid had no more time to wait, Brian checked all positions and fired the first shot at the middle shade in the cluster. The rest of the Covenant forces were quick to react, but the other snipers had already taken out the rest of their shade forces. Brigid saw Yap Tak's squad surge forward for the Brute leader. Brigid stayed back for a moment and looked around at the strike team, she saw a lurking force over the south ridge waiting for them. Brigid quickly called up her team and charged down the hill, sniping as she ran. She knew that if the force reached the main bulk of the Resistance they would be taken off guard and lose more men than they wanted to.

She slung her sniper rifle and drew a sword with her left hand, her right occupied by a grenade. She lobbed the projectile twenty yards and saw several other plasma grenades follow. The charge did not halt as the blue white explosions killed many of the advancing Covenant forces. Brigid drew her plasma pistol and opened up on the charging Brutes, she saw Jo leave command to her XO and charge forward with her Hunter squad. Brigid and Jo turned the corner after slaughtering the charging forces to find three phantoms with full Brute support units ready to fire upon them. The leader shouted something in their home language and Brigid dove for the ground, the Sangheili next to her went down and she heard a sharp cry over the intercom.

"Jo!" Brigid called as the hail of fire stopped. "Where are you?" Brigid grabbed the Sangheili next to her and dragged him behind an outcropping to check his vitals. She turned and saw Jo laying on the ground, her hunter brothers looking down on her unconscious form. Brigid quickly ran forward and dragged Jo backwards, as she did Jo's hunter brothers charged and fought like they never had before. The plasma had gotten through her shield layer, but the deadly projectile had done nothing more than scorch her armor. Then again, her brothers didn't know that. The opposing forces were quickly rendered to nothing more than a pile of corpses on the shore. Brigid sat Jo up and started treating the Sangheili that she had dragged out of the way.

"Hey," Jo said, as she became conscious, "How're we doing?"

"Few complications," Brigid said, signaling two hunters over, "Carry these two back to HQ." The second wave had deployed and the first wave was beginning their retreat, Brigid slung her weapon over her shoulder and began to double-time along side the jogging creatures.

"I don't need to be carried," Jo protested.

"Shut up," her brother said, Brigid could not see his shoulder insignia. "You're hurt, and you're going to the medic, I don't care what you say." Brigid smirked as Jo was forced to surrender to the larger creature as he carried her away from battle. She watched Jo safely to the medical facility and then walked over to the main area above the battle where many of the marines were standing. She removed her helmet.

"Hello," Brigid said. The marines flinched, but she didn't care right then. "Nice view isn't it?" One of the corporals nodded.

"Hey kid," Ja'naÃ§so said, setting down a barrel. "Can I tempt you?"

"I'll have one," Brigid said, taking a red cup from one of the aides walking around and offering more to the marines. "Beer?" The marines looked at the cup and then back at Brigid as she poured herself one out of the keg.

"You have beer?" The corporal asked. Brigid nodded as she drank. "You brought BEER to a battlefield?!"

"Sure," Brian said, walking up and offering Brigid something out of a white and blue paper bag. "Popcorn?"

"Ok!" another said, "What the fuckâ€¦ you guys bring beer and popcorn to a battle." Brigid nodded. "How do you pop the popcorn?" (I apologize, but I just find this image funny) Brian took out a fresh bag of popcorn from his pack while Brigid filled the beer cups and he held it over his super-charged plasma pistol. In thirty second the marines were sitting on a rock enjoying beer and popcorn, the first sign of home they'd had in a long time.

"I have one question," the corporal said, "Why the fuck were we ever fighting you guys?" Brigid laughed and finished the drink, walking over to Oska as he landed the command crew.

"Admiral," he said, "All non-essential personnel from the three ships have landed on HALO and are going about the usual means of preventing its activation. Though report are coming in of more difficulty because our forces are spread so thin and we have to avoid both the Covenant and the Humans."

"Right," Brigid said, "Speaking of humans, have we gotten any signals from UNSC forces where we could drop these marines off." Oska turned and motioned the question on to Maika.

"We have a few UNSC pod signals here," she said, "At these ruins, but I'm not picked up anything else strong enough to go after. I suggest a small detachment should be deployed with a human to return them."

"I'll go," Brigid said, "We'll take three squads, five warthogs, three ghosts, and a flatbed. That should protect us if anything comes along."

"Yap-Tak reports mission successful," Ja'naÃ§so reported, "He is requesting to escort us while we ferry the humans back to their people."

"Brian," Brigid said over the intercom, "Have any trouble with me borrowing Yap-Tak?"

"Nope."

"Cool," Brigid turned to Ja'naÃ§so and nodded. "We're leaving in five, make sure our troops are ready to deploy at a moment's notice, we may have to haul ass back here if they activate this thing."

"Ma'am," one marine said as they loaded into different transports, "Wouldn't it be safer than to use one of the phantoms as

salvage?"

"And be shot down the moment your people see us?" Ja'naÃ§o asked, "I'll pass on that experience, but you can go ahead if you feel like it." The marine shut his mouth and got on the flatbed next to his fellow marines.

"Let's go," Brigid said, "Jo and Brian, I'll rendezvous with you back here in a few hours."

"Luck ma'am," Brian said, taking his own unit off to go see what they could do about the library.

"Take care of yourself," Jo said, leading her own troops to salvage the battlefield and contact the team in orbit. Brigid winked her acknowledgement light and got into her warthog, Yap-Tak sat beside her with a cannon and a Sanghelli who she couldn't identify was behind on the turret, scanning the sky for any Covenant patrols. Brigid knew that they were lucky not to encounter any, the fleet had been small enough that they did not have enough scouting ships to blanket the area with phantoms.

"Encampment ahead," the Sanghelli said, "Near the ruins, they are taking defensive positions."

"There's human drop-pods all over the place," Yap-Tak said, lowering his binoculars. "It's definitely UNSC forces up there."

"Get me a radio broadcast on their channel," Brigid commanded, signaling for the column to slow down. "Encampment, this is Admiral McClain broadcasting on all UNSC channels to the encampment beyond, please respond, over."

"Unknown Unit, this is encampment," a voice sounded over the radio, "What is your purpose of approaching this camp and why do you travel with them, over."

"Lock in the signal," Brigid said, Yap-Tak did so quickly and nodded at her, signaling that they were isolated and no one else could overhear. "Encampment, Admiral, we are a peaceful force, some of your forces were found up the beach and we'd like to return them, permission to approach, over."

"Names," the voice sounded again, ignoring radio protocol.

"Marines," Brigid said, "Sound off over the radio." Each marine sounded off his name and serial number in perfect English and the sergeant relayed the situation as it happened. "Good enough for you?"

"Permission granted," the voice said. Across the way the man at the radio turned and accessed the team intercom. "Stand down." He turned back to the approaching column and zoomed in on their leader, a shock rode through his system as he confirmed what he saw. He could not believe what he saw even though it was right before his eyes.

The sun had passed directly overhead of them, and it was turning into late afternoon as the Resistance forces pulled into the ruins, it appeared as though the UNSC forces had all pulled inside. Brigid

stood up in her warthog and signaled everyone to disembark, but to keep the marines back in case it was an ambush. Ja'naÃ§o was immediately by her side, Brigid sensed that he was tense.

"What do you think Ja'naÃ§o," Brigid said, "Ambush?"

"I think they're just confused," he replied, "But that wouldn't be the first time confusion led to disaster."

"True," Brigid said, she strapped her rifle to her back and turned on her helmet light. "Let's check it out, everyone else stay back." Brigid and Ja'naÃ§o flanked the door into the ruins and Brigid inched around the corner and shined her light from side to side, there was no one there. She signaled Ja'anÃ§o to stay behind her, but he could not fit inside the door without giving away their position.

"Can't follow you," he said, "Not quietly. You signal me if anything goes wrong and I'll knock down the ceiling."

"See you soon," Brigid said. She crouched and checked the hallway to her left, it was clear, the only other option was upstairs. She kept herself close to the wall as the shadows hid her and turned off her light. There was nothing directly around the corner, but she had no idea how the structure could honeycomb into the mountain. She turned the corner and saw the marines lying low to avoid her initial scans, their commander knew what he was doing. "I see you," she said, "You can lower your weapons."

"Not just yet," the same voice she heard on the radio said, "You have some explaining to do."

"Why I'm riding with Sanghelli and Hunters, etc?" She stood up on the landing and waited for her light shields to adjust, the next moment her jaw was hanging open in her helmet.

"No," the voice replied, inside a very similar helmet with green armor encasing him, "Why you're wearing that armor?" It was a Spartan, and he had a Jackhammer pointed directly at her head.

Well - I'm writing the next chapter now so it should be up soon.

Sorry about the cliffie.

Please review- I'll write more soon.

Verya

12. Fallen into Place

Hi everyone - I know you're wondering about the almost two year break. Well - a lot of stuff happened in my personal life that kept me from writing, my editor went to college, and on top of it my computer with all of my plot plans crashed right before the last two chapters (well, chapter and epilogue) were written. After Halo 3 came out I almost considered dropping the story line because I found out what happened, though in the end I chose not to, so this fic will end with Halo 2 and we'll all pretend that I finished this on schedule

before the H3 premiere. I finally found my notes about two weeks ago and now I'm proud to say that the story is finished. Thank you all for your patience and reviews!

P.S. My one normal plot shift takes place in this chapter - I'm making the Chief's stay at the ruins a bit longer to accommodate my plot. Sorry Bungie.

P.P.S. To whom it may concern: YOUR SOUL IS MINE AND IT ALWAYS WILL BE!! BWA-HA-HA-HA-HA!! YOU CANNOT GET IT BACK!

(sorry to everyone else about that)

Verya

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Brigid stared down the launcher pointed at her face and did some quick calculations, she could disarm him quickly, but he would probably fire a rocket and hit the marines accidentally. She raised her hands and stepped fully into the light. "I'm wearing this armor because it was given to me," she said.

"You're number?" The man asked, clear tension in his voice.

"256," Brigid replied. The man lowered his jackhammer and nodded.

"117," he said, "Master Chief."

"Chief," Brigid replied, "Can I signal my forces to move in?"

"Yes," he replied, "But I still want an explanation."

"You'll get it," she replied, "Ja'naÃ§so, come on up, send the all clear."

"Yes Ma'am," he called up, turning on his light and maneuvering into the structure.

"Hello again," Killjoy said, projecting her image in front of Brigid, "It's nice to see you."

"I thought something seemed familiar," another voice said, "Chief, that's the AI that hacked the base system."

"Interesting," the Chief said, then he raised his jackhammer and made to fire once Ja'naÃ§so turned the corner. "Ready!"

As the marines gathered weapons Brigid charged forward and shoved the jackhammer downwards. "Whoa, he's with me." The marines looked at the woman in surprise as she stared down the Chief, he relaxed his grip and Brigid released her hold on his weapon. "This is Colonel Ja'naÃ§so, he is my subordinate. Several elites and grunts are on their way with your marines, after we drop them off we'll be on our way."

"I still have a few questions," Chief said, his helmet hiding the emotion that tugged at the back of his mind, he had not seen any of his squad mates in months, and he did not know if he'd find any of

them again. "And you should wait for the cover of night before returning to your base." Brigid nodded and signaled her troops to come into the structure and take up guard positions. Tensions were high as Yap-tak ordered the Sanghelli on guard next to marines, which went against everything the jarheads had learned in basic training.

"Admiral," Yap-tak said, "The guard is posted, nightfall in two hours, I suggest we move out then."

"Thank you Captain," Brigid replied, sitting next to a wall, her rifle next to the Chief's. "Get some rest."

"He's a Captain?" Chief asked, his helmet inclined slightly as he looked down at the smaller girl. "I thought that grunts were considered cannon fodder."

"They are, in the Covenant," Brigid replied, "Captain Yap-Tak is a brilliant tactician and a fearsome warrior. I wouldn't want to fight him."

"You never told me your rank 256." Chief said, leaning against a wall.

"Admiral," she replied, leaning across from him.

"I'm the highest ranking Spartan," he said, "I didn't know any of the second generation were cleared for regular deployment."

"I'm not one of your recruits 117," Brigid said, "I was going to be in Black-Ops when I was injured, the Spartan Surgeries were the only way I survived, I'm no where near as powerful as you. As for why I'm traveling with Sanghelli and the like, there's a Resistance for to the Covenant and we've been fighting with them ever since."

"That's a hard story to believe," he said, "But I'm guessing I don't have a choice."

"You don't," Brigid said, "But it wouldn't help if you did." She looked outside, wishing that the sun would set faster, she was anxious to get back to her troops. "Please excuse me, but I have to contact my forces." The Chief nodded and she walked downstairs to an abandoned section of the ruins. "Killjoy, patch me through."

"I've got Jo," She said.

"Hello Brigid," the woman said, "What do you need?"

"Have you found the map room?" Brigid asked, noticing the Chief come up behind her.

"I don't think we need it," Jo said, "I accessed files from the first Halo and I think I can find the location of the Index without it, but that isn't one of our problems."

"What's wrong?" Brigid asked.

"Well," Jo said, "I got an update from Brian, we've got the entire Covenant Fleet inbound. He's managed to hide our ships, but he doesn't know if he'll be able to stay for very long. He may have to

jump out of the system and then back in for a pick up." Brigid grit her teeth under her helmet and lowered her head.

"Roger that," she said, "Keep me informed."

"Will do Admiral," Jo said. Brigid sighed and turned back to the Chief.

"Well? Do you have any other questions?"

"I was wondering if you wanted to spar?" The Chief asked, "It's been a while since I practiced against someone like myself."

Brigid smiled and upped the shield status on her torso. "Sure Chief."

The Chief raised his fists and Brigid took a fighting stance, her hands open and flexed so her palms would be free. They stayed in that manner for a few moments and then began to circle each other slowly, sizing the other up. Then it would seem as though Hell had broken loose between the two seasoned warriors. The Chief had a huge advantage in strength and skill, but Brigid's size gave her the advantage of agility and she was easily faster than he could ever hope to be. Brigid also had flexibility on her side, though the Chief had always been lucky. He threw the first punch, his fist snapping forward faster than the eye could see, though Brigid dodged it easily. The counter she had planned had to be put off when his knee came sliding towards her face, she rolled around him and used her momentum to snap a kick to his back-plate. The shields barely connected as the Chief rolled away and came up in a fighting stance. It was Brigid's turn to attack. She faked a punch and brought her left palm in for a quick strike to his arm, blocking the counter attack with her arms and throwing her knee towards his chest as she jumped. The Chief caught the blow easily and tossed her backwards without much thought, following her quickly as she rolled out of it. Brigid managed a second roll and came up ready to fight, but the Chief landed a solid punch to her helmet. She was knocked off her feet and slid back until she hit the wall, needless to say it hurt a bit. Brigid shook off the blow and was back on her feet, the Chief coming closer, she ducked under the punch and began to circle around him, still blocking and ducking. Finally she caught his arm in just the right place and flipped him over her shoulder, he took her down with him and she was forced to roll out of the hold. Chief was back on his feet and aimed a kick at the woman's head. Brigid caught his foot and twisted it as she stood, holding him down easily. The Chief lay for a moment and then dragged his leg around to the appropriate angle, throwing Brigid off balance for the crucial moment he needed to pin her throat to the wall.

"Yield," Chief commanded, his grip present if not threatening on her throat, his other hand with a knife at the joint in between her shoulder and body, ready to sever the nerves attached to the limb.

"I accept," Brigid replied, smirking, her knife at the sensitive armor joint between his body and thigh guards, perfectly angled to sever the tendons and arteries below the hip. The Chief smiled and the two lowered their weapons. Brigid looked out the open window and saw the sun setting, it was time for her troops to leave. "You're a better soldier than I could ever hope to be Chief, I'm glad we were able to

meet."

"Perhaps we'll meet again some day," Chief said. Brigid nodded, there was a sense on comradere there she had not found with other troops, and a sense of leadership she had never seen before, certainly more than she believed that she ever possessed. Brigid had a gut instinct that she would have followed this man to the death if he'd asked her to without hesitation, it was a rare quality and she could only hope UNSC appreciated it.

"I'll look foreword to it Chief," Brigid said, "But for the moment, it is goodbye." She sheathed her weapon and turned her back on the one man who could have answered all her questions, she had given up the search for the truth about herself long ago. Ja'naÃ§o embraced her when she was close enough, sensing her troubled emotions.

"Did that human bother you sister?" He asked protectively, his shield a comforting presence at her back.

"No Ja'naÃ§o," Brigid said, giving a gentle smile under her helmet, "He didn't bother me. We should be moving on." The Admiral was back, pushing her personal needs aside until the battle was over, until she could deal with them. "Tell Yap-Tak to mount up."

"Ahead of you Admiral," Yap-Tak said, shouldering his cannon as he took his position on the flat bed. Brigid walked to the center-most Warthog and slid into the passenger seat, her jackhammer nestled gently against her leg as the small convoy took off for HQ. Brigid had a lot to think about on the way back, hardly believing how long it had been since she'd taken command of the Resistance forces, and yet how old she felt despite her years. The Chief had seemed old as well, though was clearly stronger than she could be.

"Covenant inbound!" A cry came, cutting Brigid's musing short. "Two Phantoms with Banshee support enroute to Head Quarters."

"Alert the troops," Brigid commanded over the radio, "Tell them to get to the vehicles and get ready to move. Adjust our course and come about to intercept just before HQ, we have to buy them some time. Send a message to Colonel Hetington a tell him to start scrambling the Covenant communications and battle chatter, once he finds a gap he should get into HALO atmosphere and run dark."

"We bugging out soon?" Jo asked, "I thought we were going to stick around for a bit."

"This fight isn't going to take long," Brigid replied, "What's our status?"

"Drop ships are firing up now," she said, "Tanks and ariel support is moving out to rally point Bravo two klicks outside HQ, the display should be going out to your HUD momentarily. I've got all non-essential personnel inside and we're ready to lift off on your command."

"Order one of the drop ships into the air," Yap-Tak suggested, "Have it come in with a combat drop after the first volley, finish up the attack so we can get out quickly."

"Good idea," Brigid said, "Jo, make it happen."

"Done." the colonel replied over the whine of engines, "Tangos two minutes away from your position, friendlies coming off your three in thirty seconds."

"All craft stop," Ja'naÃ§so ordered, Brigid lifted her launcher and flipped her visor to night vision. "Light discipline, bring these bastards in." The vehicles shut off their lights and motors so that the approaching force couldn't see them, a few seconds later the tanks and support forces rolled in behind them and also closed down their lights.

"Stay frosty," Brigid said over the com, "I have the first shot, tanks focus on the phantoms, cannons and machine guns on the banshees. Open fire after my signal." The affirmative green light activated on her HUD and Brigid closed her scope in on the horizon. A cloud of Covenant troops edged closer to her firing range as she locked onto the lead scout, the small beep of confirmation rang in her ear. She pulled the trigger and quickly let the second rocket follow the first. The banshee burst into flame before it had time to send out a distress beacon and Brigid reloaded the jackhammer.

A river of plasma and fire was unleashed against the Covenant forces as the group emptied their stores of ammunition. Tanks and Scorpions traded shots to the large Phantoms, the turret attachments falling to the ground as the armored sides began to cave from the constant barrage. The banshees hardly stood a chance from the fire below, having to dodge nearly invisible rockets, stores of plasma from the cannons, and combined turret power from the ghosts and warthogs. Once Jo's drop ship entered the battle it was over, the only sign that the Covenant had even attacked was the large pile of burning metal on the beach.

"Well done," Brigid said, "Everyone pull back and get onto your ships, we're pulling out." Jo landed her Phantom and Brigid climbed aboard.

"Update from Brian," she said, "He managed to punch a hole and bring our ships into a geosync. orbit with HALO. He says that the Covenant sent out a distress call several hours ago, the main fleet should be arriving soon."

"They're bringing the whole fleet?" Brigid asked, surprised. "We have less time than I thought. Order Brian to keep our ships out of sight and keep us posted. Jo, we need to find a new campsite for the night, what do we have."

"Some scenic lakes on the other side of these mountains," Jo said, pulling up a map of the region. "Looks homey enough."

"Put us down in the brush land," Brigid said, "Make camp for the night. We'll start in the morning." Brigid turned and saw the sun beginning to rise over the far horizon, they would only have enough time to grab a few hours of sleep before the real battle began. They would have to buy enough time to get everyone off and get through the fleet. The ships engines were turned off and Brigid exited her ship to camp out on the wing, trying to remember the last time she had been able to sleep under a sea of stars.

It ha seemed she barely closed her eyes when she was being shaken

awake again, the sun was now up and her HQ was a flurry of work. "Admiral," one of her aides said, "Admiral, wake up! The Covenant fleet has arrived and the Prophet of Regret has been assassinated." Brigid's eyes shot open and she sat up quickly.

"What?" Brigid asked, climbing off the wing as she approached her staff. "Where are we?"

"Covenant battle chatter shows that the fleet arrived about forty minutes ago," Jo said, motioning to the sand tables. "They're in high orbit here. The Prophet of Regret was killed by a 'Demon' in this structure here, they've destroyed the structure. We don't know if anyone was in there or not, but our spy tells us that the Covenant is in upheaval with the death of Regret and the council is furious." She smiled and leaned her fists against the table. "They're replacing the Honor Guard with Brutes."

"They're replacing the Snaghelli?" Brigid asked. "That could accelerate our plans, contact our man, tell him to be ready when the signal comes." Her security officer nodded and went off to the long-range radio. "Get me Colonel Hentinton on the radio, I'm going to need a patch to Covesash on Ithil, encoded on the highest security level." Brian called her back in two minutes and let her know that the patch was secure.

"Admiral," Covesash said, "I hear that there is good news."

"I might be waking up the kids soon," Brigid said, "Since one of the parents is in trouble, we're going to wake them up." Covesash nodded and sent her the codes to wake up their agents inside the Covenant. "I'll call you when I have more information." They signed off the call and Brigid went back to the sand tables. "We have our codes, send them out and order an activation of orders at 1600 hours."

"That's not until tonight," Jo said, "Are you sure you want to wait that late."

"It'll give us time to come up with a plan and contact the humans," Brigid said, "Start broadcasting on all known UNSC channels and block out the Covenant, we're going to need to coordinate attacks if we want to get off this ring alive."

"Admiral," the radio operator monitoring the Covenant said, "I just got a message that said something about an Ark, the Covenant have docked High Charity there and sent an attack squadron after the Index."

"We have to get to the Index now," Brigid said, "How's contacting the UNSC ship coming?"

"I've got their location," the radio operator said, "But they're not responding to any hails."

"Killjoy," Brigid said, "Do you still have the protocols for UNSC communication from separate friendly forces?" Killjoy winked a green light on her HUD, Brigid plugged a cable into the back of her helmet. "Do your thing." Killjoy quickly relayed the commands to the operator and he was able to hail the UNSC commander. "This is Admiral McClain broadcasting on all emergency channels, if any UNSC forces can read

me please respond on this channel."

"Nice to hear from you Admiral," a clear female voice rang through, "I'm Commander Keys of the In Amber Clad, how many ships have you brought."

"Three," Brigid replied, "Listen quickly, I need to know where your forces are so we can coordinate our attacks to cause maximum damage. My troops are currently on the beaches and we've repelled all Covenant forces, we're scanning for the control room now."

"Don't bother," Keys replied, "I'm already on my way to the Index now."

"Good," Brigid said, "Give us your location and we'll come to back you up." The coordinates appeared on her HUD. Brigid cursed under her breath. "It'll take a while to get to you because of the Covenant blockade, but we'll be there as soon as we can. Radio me on the channel if you need us to come in guns blazing."

"Will do," Keys said, "Thank you for coming Admiral, I wasn't aware any of our forces were in this quadrant."

Brigid gave the commands for everyone to load up and move out. They would have to move slowly over ground, but it was the safest way to secure her troops without being spotted. "We're not UNSC Commander. Tell your men to look for the rag-tag group in marine green. McClain signing off." Brigid cut the connection and mounted her warthog. "I'll drive."

"Jeep Jockey," Jo mocked over their comm.

"Says the pilot," Brigid mocked back. "I don't know how long we can burn these engines in formation, but we'll be arriving right about the time that our sleepers activate and start the civil war. "Ja'naÃ§o, any news from the Hunters?"

"None, I'm afraid," Ja'naÃ§o replied from his place near her warthog. "We will have to see, though once we arrive we should sway many away from the lies of the Prophets. There has been great unrest since the Brutes began to seize power." Brigid nodded and shifted up a gear before locking the pedal in place. Nearly four hours later they engaged the first Covenant forces they found. The Resistance forces split in two, with the main group led by Jo headed on to aid Keys, a small detachment of forces chased the Covenant into some ruins. As the battle raged the Covenant realized they were vastly outnumbered and called in their surrender.

"That was fast," Brigid replied from her position crouched behind a large column. "Yap-Tak, what do you think?"

"Too easy," he replied, switching over to his squads channel, "My snipers, cover the doorway. If hands go to weapons your orders are to shoot first, one shot one kill." Green lights winked on the HUDs as snipers took positions. Brigid smiled, glad to have the fierce warrior at her side.

"Covenant forces," Brigid called, "Throw down your weapons and come out with your hands up." Brigid saw a group of weapons come flying out the door with a platoon of SnagHELLi and a few supporting squads

of grunts. She smiled when she saw who was in command, and ordered the troops to stand down. "Fancy seeing you here."

"And you, Admiral," the Sanghelli in front replied as his troops lowered their arms. A few grunts were confused, and so were a few Sanghelli. "I thought you were Coveant forces."

"Odd, thats what we thought you were," Brigid replied, "It's good to meet you in person." The Sanghelli clicked his two remaining mandibles and saluted.

"My troops are at your command Admiral," he said, "Forgive me, but I had to accelerate your orders when the Arbiter arrived. The lies of the Prophets have been revealed and our eyes opened."

"Thank you Commander," Brigid said, "What is beyond these ruins?"

"The Control Room is on the other side of this canyon," Half-Jaw replied, "The Arbiter and a Sergeant Johnson left less than five minutes ago, we were mounting up when you entered the canyon."

"In that case," Brigid said, "Let's mount up and roll out, they'll need all the help they can get. Ja'naÃ§o, get on the radio and tell Jo to make a bee line for the next canyon, deploy our banshees. Send out our code over all channels, get as many on our side as we can." Ja'naÃ§o nodded and the group took off. All over the battlefield Sanghelly, Hunters and Grunts shifted their line of fire towards the Brutes. One Hunter team even stopped in the middle of their charge against a line of marines, turning and attacking the Brute and Jackal forces at their back as Sanghelli aided in the slaughter of Covenant troops. Marine forces did not question the turn of events that allowed them complete military victory. Brigid's troops rolled through the canyon, destroying all in their path as they got to the structure, but they were to late to help. Sitting outside the structure were several people and a Sanghelli in ceremonial armor.

"Admiral McClain," the young woman in UNSC greys said, "Is this your force?"

"Yes," Brigid replied, "It is Commander. What happened?"

"We were able to stop HALO from activating," Keys said, "But Truth got away on the Ark, the Covenant Fleet is heading back to Earth."

"Only half of it will be fighting with the Prophets then," Half-Jaw said, turning to his subordinate, "Order my carriers to ready for battle, we're leaving as soon as everyone is aboard."

Brigid also turned to her radio operator, "Send in a pickup call to Brian and Pasada, we're heading back to Earth as well. Commander, where's your ship?"

"It's in a low orbit a few hundred clicks away," she said, "I have a Pelican inbound for a pickup."

"Then lets go," Brigid said as the troops organized to depart. After long years of hard fighting, they had finally caused a rift in the

Covenant. Now, all they had to do was break it.

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Yea, I know that the story ending was kind of a cliffie (Just like Halo 2's ending) so I wrote you guys a little Epilogue. Have fun - it'll be up next week.

13. Ending

Yea, I know that the story ending was kind of a cliffie (Just like Halo 2's ending) so I wrote you guys a little Epilogue. Have fun - it'll be up next week.

Brigid smiled as the sun glinted off the horizon, setting over the beautiful forest that surrounded her. Her artificial eye tracked a few movements from the birds that flew in and out of the tree line, but she no longer had to search for patrolling banshees. A soft breeze swept across her skin and she gave a soft smile as the sounds of laughter echoed up to her balcony.

"This seems familiar," a warm voice said from behind her as a pair of strong tanned arms wrapped around her waist.

"A little," Brigid replied, one hand resting over the ones locked around her. "Hard to believe it's fifteen years since that day."

"Almost sixteen," he replied, "You're getting old, Brigid my girl."

"So are you Michael," Brigid replied. They stood like that for a few minutes, the sounds of laughter still echoing up. "Did you ever think we'd end up here?"

"I didn't think we'd end up out here," Michael said, "But I knew that we'd be together." He smiled and kissed her cheek. "Though I imagined more kids."

"Two isn't enough?" Brigid asked.

Michael looked down at her. "Brigid, I'm a Carias, we can never have too many kids, and we have one daughter."

Brigid smirked, "Not for long."

It sunk in and Michael laughed, spinning Brigid and kissing her gently as he wrapped his arms around her in a hug. "Only you would tell me like that." Brigid kissed him again and they looked over the balcony. "Ja'naÃ§o will be happy he's going to be an uncle again."

"I think he likes kids," Brigid said, "Speaking of kids. Sarge's granddaughter was born three weeks ago and Jo just had her baby."

"That's good," Michael said, "Did she and Kyle decide on a name?"

"Yeah," Brigid said, "Cole Matthew Hentington."

"I guess everything turned out the way it was meant to be," Michael said, "In one way or another."

"There's always loose ends to tie up Michael," Brigid said, "Because the journey never really ends." She gave a sad little smile and ran her fingers over the smooth skin of his neck. "Will you make sure Marianne gets to bed?"

"Sure," Michael said, kissing Brigid's neck. "I'll see you when you get back." Brigid nodded and walked downstairs and out the back door to where Ja'naÃ§o was romping with Marianne.

"Ja'naÃ§o, if you fall on my daughter I will end you," Brigid said.

"Don't know what you're saying," he said as the little girl clambered on his back. "She's winning."

"What do you expect?" Marianne asked, her brown eyes twinkling. "I'm my mother's daughter."

"And a fierce warrior at that," Ja'naÃ§o said as he set her down and they lay on the grass. "One day I'm sure my children will be terrified of you." Marianne smiled and Ja'naÃ§o ruffled her hair as she flounced inside, giving her mother a kiss on the way. "I hear congratulations are in order."

"Can I hide nothing from you?" Brigid asked.

"Never could," Ja'naÃ§o replied. "Are you planning to go to the memorial opening on Earth?"

"No," Brigid said, "There's no need to open up old wounds and besides, none of our forces are going to be mentioned." He stood and Brigid approached him as he strapped his shield on.

"Walk with me a bit," Ja'naÃ§o said, scooping her up in his shield as he did in the old days. "I'll walk you as far as the village." The two old friends chatted as Ja'naÃ§o walked, humans had come to settle on Ithil and the new Science Center had just been opened under Pasada's supervision so that the different races could advance technology together and share different ideas. Human children now played alongside Sanghelli and Grunt younglings, though their parents still often held contempt for what the previous generation had done, old scars were slowly healing. Ja'naÃ§o and Brigid parted ways at the edge of the village.

"Send my regards to Ke'lidash," Brigid said, Ja'naÃ§o replied with a wave and Brigid walked down the path to a row of even white stones that glowed ethereally in the dimming light. She found the memorial she was looking for and sat down next to it. "I still miss you Kulase." It was the only words she needed to say. It had been five years since his death and the great war, friends and family had been torn apart, but she could still smile when she thought of what had been gained. Brigid looked up at the stars and felt peace for the first time in many years, letting go of old pains in the promise of new beginnings.

Ok - the last sentence is corny, but in the end its my story. All characters except mine belong to the guys at Bungie. Let me know what you thought.

~Verya

End
file.